



# THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 3, 1901, by Frank Tousey

No. 61.

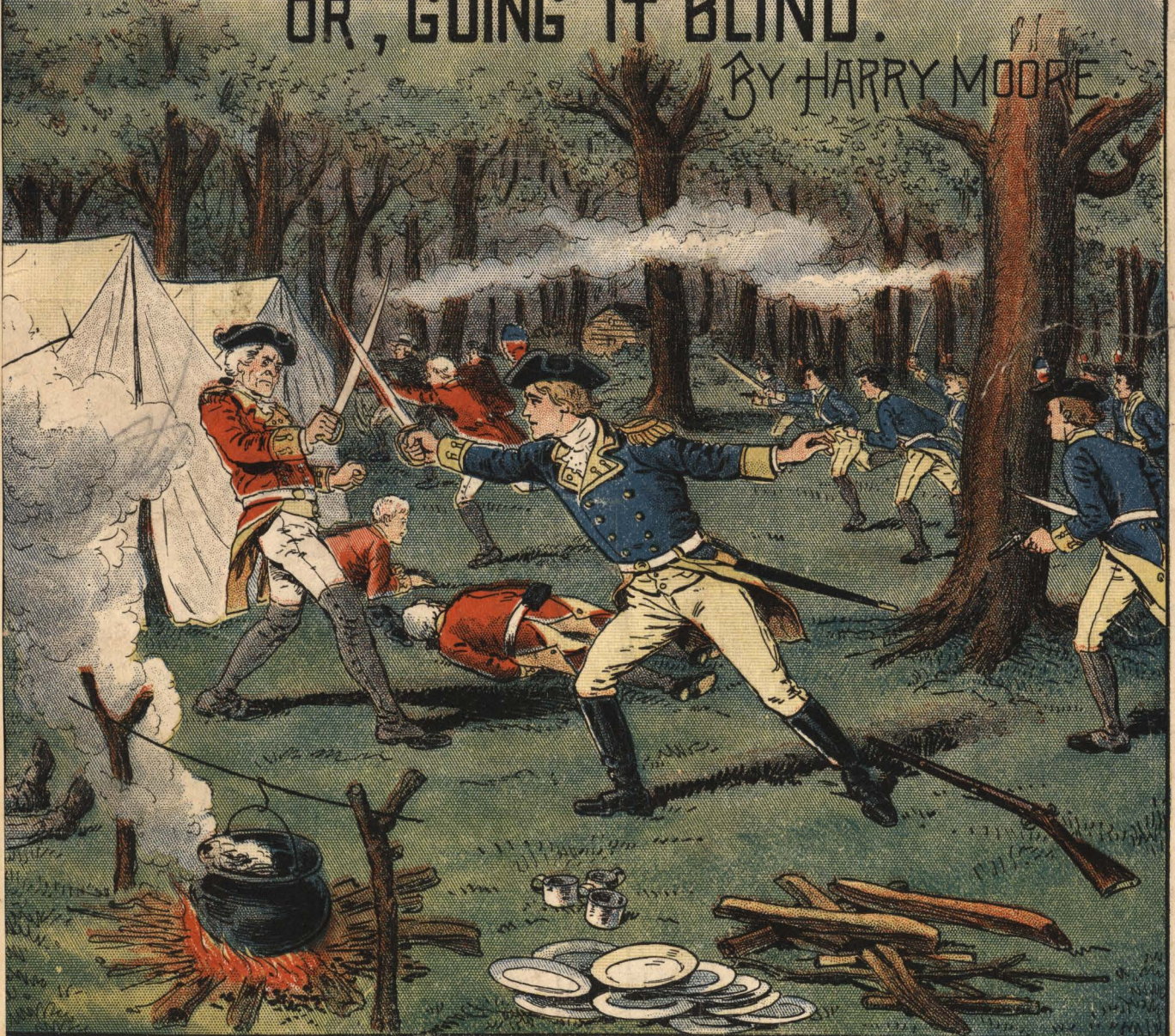
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 28, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

## THE LIBERTY BOYS' SEALED ORDERS;

### OR, GOING IT BLIND.

BY HARRY MOORE



Tarleton was almost wild with rage, and kept shrieking commands to his men to "Stand your ground!" "Kill the rebels!" It was indeed an interesting not to say sensational spectacle.



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*Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, February 4, 1901. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1902, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, 24 Union Square, New York.*

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NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 28, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

## CHAPTER I

### UNDER SEALED ORDERS.

"Well, boys, get ready; we are going to travel."

"Where are we going, Dick?"

"I don't know."

"What's that?"

"You don't know?"

"That's what I said—I don't know."

The scene was the quarters occupied by "The Liberty Boys of '76" in the encampment of the patriot army. The "Liberty Boys" were a hundred youths who had banded together as a company, and under the command of Dick Slater had made a wonderful name for themselves as fighters and dare-devils generally. Whenever there was a battery to be taken, or dare-devil work of any kind to be done, then the "Liberty Boys" were called upon to do it, and they usually succeeded. At any rate, they always gave a good account of themselves, and if they didn't succeed it was through no fault of theirs.

The first speaker, as noted above, was Dick Slater, the captain of the "Liberty Boys." He had just come from headquarters, where he had had an interview with General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental army. When Dick had said that they were going to travel, the interest of the youths had been aroused, for they were always glad of a chance to be moving, and of action, but when he had said that he didn't know where they were going, they hardly knew what to think.

"Say, Dick," said Bob Estabrook, a handsome young fellow of about Dick's own age, "you're just giving us a jolly, aren't you?"

"Oh, no, Bob," was the reply; "I mean every word I have said."

"And you say we are going somewhere, and yet you don't know where?"

"That is just what I say."

"Then how in blazes are we going to get there? And how will we know when we do get there?"

There was a lugubrious, disgusted look on Bob's face that was enough to make one laugh, and, indeed, a number of the boys, Dick included, did laugh.

"Oh, we'll find out where we are going in due time, I suppose, and then we will know when we get there."

"Say, Dick, explain what you mean, anyway," said Bob. "I'm in suspense, and I never like to be in that condition."

"All right; I'll tell you all I know about it. You know, I have just been to headquarters?"

"Yes, yes!"

General Washington sent for me, you know, and when I got there he said he had some work for me, but that, owing to certain things which he could not speak of, and over which he had no control, he could not at that time tell me what it was he wished me to do, or where he wished me to go. 'I am going to send you away under sealed orders, my boy,' said he, and——"

"Sealed orders!"

"Great Scott!"

"Why, that's the way they send a fleet of vessels to sea in war times—under sealed orders! And not even the officers know anything about where they are going until they are well out to sea, and then they open their orders, and head away for their destination."

"And that is just what we are to do, boys," said Dick eagerly. "The commander-in-chief is going to send us away under sealed orders. We are to take the orders and ride one hundred miles from here, in any direction we may wish, and then we are to stop and break the seal and read the orders. After that we will know where we are going and all about it."

"Say, that's great!"

"It is immense."

"That strikes me just about right, Dick."

"I like the idea. It smacks of mystery."

"I'll wager a good deal that we are going into something that promises a great deal of lively work, Dick."

Such were a few of the exclamations to which the "Liberty Boys" gave utterance, and judging by the happy,



eager and satisfied look on Dick's face he was well pleased over the prospect before them. "I think you are right about that," he replied to the last speaker. "There must be exciting work to be done, or the commander-in-chief would never send us away in such a manner. I can't understand, however, why he sends us away under sealed orders."

"Well, one part of it is plain enough," said Mark Morrison, "and that is that he doesn't want anybody to know where we are going."

"Yes, that is a self-evident fact, Mark, and I guess it will be as well for us not to say anything to anybody outside of our own company regarding the fact that we are going away under sealed orders."

All right; we'll keep mum on that point, Dick."

"I judge that he is sending us somewhere to strike the British a blow in an unexpected quarter," went on Dick, "and if it was known where we were going word might be sent to the redcoats in some mysterious manner, and spoil it all."

"True," agreed Bob. "There might be a British spy in the encampment at this very moment, who would take the news to the British."

"That's right."

The boys were excited. They had been in the patriot army four years now, and had been sent on many dangerous expeditions, but never before had they been sent under sealed orders, and somehow they fancied that this meant that they were to be given some very dangerous and exciting work to do. This was just what they liked. They would rather fight than eat, any day, and as this adventure promised considerable they were happy.

"When are we to start, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Right away after dinner."

"Good!"

"I'm to go back to headquarters at half-past eleven and get my orders, and then we are to go just as soon as we like."

"I see. The commander-in-chief leaves it all to you, eh?"

"Yes. His only reservation, or order, is that I take the orders, go one hundred miles away from the encampment, and then open and read."

"That is simple enough."

"Yes, and interesting enough," said Sam Sanderson.

"You are right about that," agreed Bob Estabrook.

"Jove! I'm all excitement, and I don't know whether I can hold my curiosity in check till we get a hundred miles from here or not."

"Afraid you may burst, eh, Bob?" laughed Dick.

"Yes."

"Perhaps we had better put some strong straps around your body, Bob," suggested Mark Morrison.

"No," with a grin. "I'll risk it."

"Well, you boys get to work, now, and be in readiness to start immediately after dinner," said Dick.

"All right; we'll be ready," said several.

They went to work at once, and looked to their weapons with great carefulness. Each "Liberty Boy" was possessed of four pistols and a musket and sword. They were equipped, they were terrors, indeed, in a wild charge upon the enemy. They would, first of all, empty their muskets, then, sticking the weapons back in the holsters on the side of the saddle, they would draw their pistols, and fire four shots, after which they would draw their swords and woe to those who stood in their way. They were simply terrible in their reckless charges, as thousands of redcoats who had seen them in action could have testified.

Dick waited till eleven o'clock, then he made his way to headquarters, and at half-past he was called into the private room of the commander-in-chief.

"Ah, here you are, eh, Dick?" remarked General Washington, with a pleasant smile, such as few ever saw on his face. Usually he was stern-looking and brusque-appearing, but he had a great liking for Dick Slater, and always greeted him pleasantly.

"Yes, your excellency, I always try to be on time," replied Dick.

"A very excellent rule," the great man said, "and one which is an absolute necessity in times of warfare. Well, you will be ready to start to-day?"

"We are ready now, sir. We will start immediately after dinner."

The commander-in-chief nodded approvingly. "Very good!" he said. "Very good, indeed. Well, here are your orders." He held out a document, which was sealed on the side where the fold was made. "You understand what is required, Dick," he went on. "I explained that when you were here before."

"Yes, your excellency. I am to take these orders, and go one hundred miles away from here before opening them. Then I am to follow out the instructions therein."

"That is it exactly. I am sorry to have to send you away in this fashion, as you will be in a measure going blind, but I think it is for the best, ay, that it is necessary; and so that is sufficient excuse."

"It is not for me to have any objections to going in



his fashion, your excellency. You are to command, and am to obey. I may say that I rather like the idea, as it gives a spice to the adventure. The boys are almost wild with excitement and eagerness to be off, so that they may learn where we are to go, and all about it."

"I am glad that they are pleased; and I will say, Dick, that I am sending you where there will be plenty of lively work—work which you will like, I am sure, and I have work."

"We will do our best, sir."

"I know that you will, Dick; and I am aware, too, that your best means what anyone could do, and better than the majority could do. That is why I am sending 'The Liberty Boys of '76.' It is work that will require headlong dash and desperate and reckless valor, and you are the boys who exactly fill the bill. I know that you will do the work, if any party of patriot soldiers can."

"As I said before, your excellency, we will do our best, and if it can be done we will do it."

Dick placed the document carefully in his pocket, and then, after a little further conversation with the commander-in-chief, bade him good-by—receiving a hearty handshake—and saluting, took his departure.

"Did you get the sealed orders, Dick?" queried Bob Stabrook eagerly, as Dick put in an appearance at their quarters.

"Yes, I have them here," and he slapped his breast.

"Good! Then we'll start right away after dinner, sure, eh?"

"Sure, Bob."

The boys were all excitement, and asked Dick a number of questions. He told them just as much as the commander-in-chief had told him, and, of course, they had to be satisfied with that.

"I'm glad it promises considerable in the way of lively work, anyway," said Bob.

"And so am I," declared Mark Morrison.

"You may be sure there is lively work, and plenty of it, ahead of us," said Sam Sanderson, "or the commander-in-chief would not have said so. 'When he says there is work ahead—look out!'"

"That's right," agreed Dick. "He is not given to exaggerating such things."

The boys ate their dinner, and then began making their final preparations. When all was done they mounted their horses and rode out of the encampment.

"Which way, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I'm going straight south," replied Dick. "I don't know whether or not that is the right direction, but I'm

going that way. Somehow, it seems to me that if there is work to do, it must lie in that direction."

"All right. Whatever you say settles it. Lead on, old man, and we'll follow."

So the party of "Liberty Boys" galloped away toward the south. They were going it blind; were traveling under sealed orders, but it made no difference to them; it was to make it even more pleasant. They laughed, talked and jested, and were as happy as larks, seemingly.

There was to be lively work ahead, but little did they care. Indeed, that was what they wanted. Their only thought for the moment was to get one hundred miles away from the patriot encampment, so that they might open the sealed orders and find out where they were going, and why.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ORDERS ARE READ.

"Well, don't you think we are a hundred miles from headquarters, Dick?"

"I think we are, Bob."

The "Liberty Boys" were riding along a country road, away down in New Jersey. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon of the day succeeding the one on which they left the patriot encampment, as already detailed.

They had ridden hard and their horses were beginning to show the effects of it. They were perspiring, and many of them were panting.

"Why not stop somewhere and read the sealed orders, Dick?"

"I am going to, Bob. Do you see that clump of trees, yonder, by the roadside?"

"Yes."

"We will stop there and go into camp and read the orders."

"Good! I think it a good idea to read the orders as quickly as possible, for we may be going in exactly the wrong direction."

"Yes, we may be—but I don't think we are."

They soon reached the clump of trees, and, leaping to the ground, the youths tied their horses to trees and threw themselves down in the shade.

"Now, let's hear the orders, Dick!" said Bob.

"Yes, yes—the orders!" was the cry.

Dick drew the document from his pocket, looked at it



a moment and then deliberately broke the seal. The youths watched him eagerly, and Bob looked as if he wished to seize the paper and open it in a hurry and possess himself of the contents.

"Say, you're as slow as molasses in January!" he growled, a comical look of disgust on his face. "I could have had that thing opened and read by this time!"

"Life is too short for one to rush, Bob," was the calm reply; "there is no need of hurrying."

Dick calmly went ahead opening the document, and as he did so he said: "Shall I read the contents out loud, or shall I read it all as quickly as possible and then tell you what it contains?"

"Oh, read it over, Dick, and then tell us," said Mark Morrison. "We haven't any ear for formal instructions."

The majority nodded their approval, and Bob, who was eager to know the contents, was forced to wait. He grumbled, half to himself, but it was easy to see that he was not in earnest, and that whatever way Dick wished to do was all right.

Dick read rapidly, and was soon in possession of the contents of the paper. "Where do you suppose we are to go?" he asked, with a smile, as he finished reading.

"I don't know; where?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"You fellows could never guess."

"Of course not; so tell us at once, Dick!" cried Bob. "Don't you see that I am about to burst with curiosity? Hurry, or you will have to plant me 'neath the weeping willows which don't grow around here!"

"They would weep if they knew you were to be planted 'neath them!" said Mark Morrison, sarcastically, whereat Bob groaned in such a comical manner that all laughed.

"Well, I'll tell you where we are going," said Dick; "we are ordered to go from here, straight to——"

"Oh, tell it! Tell it!" cried Bob. "Tell it, before I get up and slay you like Samson did the Philistines!"

"We are going straight from here to South Carolina!" said Dick, impressively.

"What! Away down South?"

"You don't mean it!"

"I've always wanted to go down there!"

"What are we going there for, Dick?"

"We are going to do everything we can in a general way to look after and protect the patriot citizens of North and South Carolina; but when we get down into South Carolina we have some work of a special character cut out for us."

"What is it?"

"You have all heard of Tarleton, and 'Tarleton's Legion,' have you not?"

"Yes, yes!" was the cry.

"He is known as 'Tarleton, the Butcher,'" said Mark Morrison.

"You are right; and he is butchering on every hand, down in South Carolina. He is robbing, pillaging and murdering the patriot people of the State, and the commander-in-chief is sending us down there to put a stop to it."

"Oh, say! that is going to give us some work to do, or I'm no judge!" cried Sam Sanderson.

"You are right; but we are the boys who can do the work, if anybody can!" said Bob.

"He is a terrible man," said Dick, "and his men are bad ones in a fight, too!"

"So are we!" said Bob. "We will give Mr. Tarleton a dose of his own medicine."

"Several doses, if we get the chance," said Mark Morrison.

"I don't suppose we will have much difficulty in finding the opportunity," said Dick.

The boys discussed the matter with eagerness, and from all standpoints. They recalled everything they had heard regarding the status of affairs in the South, and were eager to reach the scene of their future operations.

"The commander-in-chief says in this document that they are having terrible times down in North and South Carolina," said Dick; "the Tories are committing all kinds of outrages on their Whig neighbors, and are robbing and stealing on every side, and in many instances murdering."

"That is a terrible state of affairs!" said Mark Morrison, shudderingly.

"I suppose Tarleton is the chief man in that sort of business, isn't he?" inquired Bob.

"Yes, he is the head and front of it all," said Dick.

"All right; just let me get a chance at Mr. Tarleton. I'll put a stop to his work or know the reason why!"

"A great many of the patriot families have been forced to take to the swamps to save their lives," said Dick "and they are actually living there, subsisting as best they may on whatever they can get hold of that is eatable. They have to live on wild game, mostly."

"That is bad!" said Mark Morrison; "to think of them having to live in swamps!"

"We'll catch Tarleton and the men of his gang, and stick their heads in the mud of those same swamps and



smother them to death!" declared Bob, with absolute seriousness, whereat the other youths laughed.

"I mean it!" the youth declared; "it would serve them right—be just about the right fate for them."

"I believe I'd rather assist in stringing them up to the limb of a big oak or elm tree," said Sam Sanderson.

"Any way will suit me, I guess; just so we get them," said Bob.

The youths remained there till it was time to eat supper, and then they ate their frugal meal, after which they mounted and rode onward toward the South.

"It is so hot in the middle of the day that we will ride about half of each night, from now on," said Dick.

"We'll ride all night and half the day, if you say so, Dick," said Bob; "I will just say that I, for one, am itching for a chance at 'Tarleton, the Butcher,' and his band of butchers!"

"And I! And I!" was the cry from the rest.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE "LIBERTY BOYS" MAKE A GOOD BEGINNING.

One evening, about ten days later, a party of men sat around a camp-fire in the woods bordering on the Santee River, in South Carolina. The point where the camp was located was a little opening in the timber, but all around was the forest. It was very open timber, however, there being scarcely any underbrush, and it was easy for horses to make their way through. There were and are lots of swamps in South Carolina, but there were none in the immediate locality of which we write.

This party of men was a portion of the force of the terrible Tarleton, and they had been on a plundering expedition. This was evidenced by the number of horses they had, there being three or four to each man, and by the lot of articles tied up in tablecloths, quilts and blankets, which were lying near at hand.

The men were, in the main, Tories; though there may have been a few British among them, and they were talking and laughing, and recounting their recent experiences and bragging of their achievements with great gusto.

"Say, old man Somers made a great fight to-day, didn't he?" said one big fellow, dark-faced and fierce-looking.

"Yes, he did," from another; "but he was a fool to fight, for what could he expect to do against thirty of us?"

"Nothing at all—except get killed, ez he did!" was the reply.

"An' sarve 'im right, I say!" from another; "cuss 'im! He hit me a nasty crack with the butt uv his musket. Et wuz glancin' er et would a-be'n all up with me."

"Waal, he won't hit yo' no more, Jim, so yo're ahead uv 'im, ennyhow," from a comrade.

"Whut'll his folks do, d'yo' s'pose?" still another queried.

"I dunno," replied the dark-faced, fierce-looking fellow. He was the leader of this little band, and his name was Robert Gunderson; but his comrades always called him "Black Bob."

"Don't keer, eether, hey?" from one.

"Waal, I don' keer mutch whut becomes uv ther ole woman an' ther kid, but I kain't say ther same uv ther gal, Stella. She's ez purty ez er pieter, an' I've erbout made up my min' ter make her Mrs. Gunderson!"

Exclamations escaped the lips of the majority, while a few laughed aloud. They were the ones who did not stand in awe of their black-faced leader. The laughter angered him, and he glared about him like a tiger at bay, and snarled out: "Waal, whut air yo' fellers a-he-hawin' erbout? Whut is thar ter larf erbout, ennyhow?"

"Ther idee uv yo' a-thinkin' uv shinin' up ter thet gal, Bob!" replied one, boldly. "Why, yo' air ole enuff ter be her father, an' she is ez sweet an' purty ez er peach, w'ile yo' air——"

"Ez homely ez a mud fence, hey? Waal, I may be all thet, but I don' like ter be tole erbout et, d'yo' heer?"

"Oh, yas, I heer, all right; but et don' make no diff'rance ter me, Black Bob. Yo' hain't my boss, yo' see, an' I sez jes' whut I please, whether yo' likes et er not!"

"Cuss yo', Joe Snively, I've er good min' ter put a bullet through yo'; thet's whut I hev!" and he made a motion as if to draw a pistol.

"Don' yo' do et, Bob!" came warningly from the other. "Don' yo' do et, ef yo' wants ter live ter be ther husban' uv thet leetle gal!"

He half-rose as he spoke, and it looked as if there was going to be a duel between the two, offhand, but suddenly there came an interruption.

Out from the shadow of the trees dashed nearly a hundred horsemen. They came forward with a rush, and were upon the frightened Tories almost before they knew what was taking place. In the hands of the riders were bright-bladed swords, and as they rode over the Tories the swords flashed up and down, and the Tories fell to the ground, split almost to the waist, in many instances.



As they dashed onward, across the opening, a wild cheer went up from the lips of the fierce riders. "Down with the king!" was the cry. "Long live Liberty!"

The riders—who were no other than "The Liberty Boys of '76," brought their horses to a stop, and whirling around, dashed back toward the fire, ready to cut down any of the Tories whom they had missed in the first sweep. But they had missed only one—Black Bob Gunderson—and as they started back they caught sight of this individual, who was running with all possible speed for the shelter of the trees.

The "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to a wild yell, and a dozen swerved aside and rode after him, drawing their pistols and firing as quickly as possible; but if the fugitive was hurt he did not show it, for he kept on running and went out of sight among the trees.

"Come on, fellows; follow me!" cried Dick. "We will not stop here. We will go on down the road a mile or so farther and will then go into camp."

"What about the dead men back yonder?" asked Bob.

"They are Tarleton's Butchers," was the grim reply; "and if they are buried, their friends will have to do it. That fellow who got away will see to it that they are attended to."

"That's so; I suppose he will."

The "Liberty Boys" had reached the neighborhood where we now find them, only a few minutes before they made the deadly swoop upon the Tories. They had caught sight of the camp-fire and Bob had crept over and made an investigation; and when he returned and reported that it was a band of Tories, and probably a portion of the force under Tarleton, Dick had quickly made up his mind to strike them a blow. They had rode slowly and silently through the timber till they came to the edge of the opening and then had charged out and across the opening, cutting the frightened and demoralized Tories down, mercilessly.

"I guess that will open the eyes of Tarleton's Butchers," said Mark Morrison, as they rode onward down the road.

"Yes; and they will realize that some rival butchers have set up in business in this part of the country," said Bob.

"Bob said this seriously, without intending any levity, and this was understood, and no one laughed. If they were to be pitted against butchers, they must be butchers, too, and all understood this very well.

It was a moonlight night, and the youths could see almost as well as if it had been daylight. They had gone

perhaps a mile when they suddenly came upon a scene which made them pause, involuntarily.

The embers of a burned farmhouse were near at hand, only a few yards from the road, and near the ruins, seated on the ground, sobbing as if their hearts were broken, were two women and a boy of perhaps ten years.

"Say, this is terrible!" said Dick; "something terrible has taken place here, to-day. Wait a moment, boys, while I go and investigate."

Dick leaped to the ground and made his way to where the three sat, or rather crouched, and when he drew near them he saw that the form of a man lay on the ground before them. A suspicion of the dread truth came to him.

"There has been bloody work here!" he thought; "doubtless the man is dead, and likely he was the head of this family. I have little doubt that this is the work of those fellows we ran across, back up the road—and I hope that it was they who did it, for if such is the case they have already been punished."

The three were so engrossed with their sorrow that they did not note the approach of the youth until after he had coughed to apprise them, and then they whirled, with cries of alarm.

"Do not be alarmed," said Dick, gently; "we are friends, not enemies, and even if we were not friends we would not make war on women and children."

"Oh, sir, see what terrible work has been done here, to-day!" the elder woman said, tears streaming from her eyes. "See, there lies my husband, my dear, loving husband, dead—killed, ruthlessly, by Tarleton's terrible men!"

"I suspected as much," said Dick, gently; "it is bad; very bad, indeed, and I am sorry for you. I sympathize with you, lady, and if there is anything that we can do to aid you, you have only to command us."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! You speak kindly, and I am sure you and your companions are not murderers, as were those who came here this evening and robbed us, burned our house and killed my beloved husband."

"You may be sure we are not, lady," said Dick; "if I mistake not, this work was done by a portion of Tarleton's band, and——"

"Yes, yes; you are right!" the woman cried. "It was a portion of Tarleton's band under the command of a black-hearted villain, named Bob Gunderson, though almost everybody calls him 'Black Bob.' He used to pretend to be our friend, even though he was a Tory, while we were Whigs; but when Tarleton began his work of pillage and murder, and the Tories and British obtained



the ascendancy here in South Carolina, this terrible man joined Tarleton's band and was made one of his lieutenants; and to-day he came here with his force and went away, leaving things as you see them now—oh, my poor, poor husband!" and the woman sank on her knees beside the silent form once more.

"Oh, mother, dear mother, please do not give way to your grief again!" pleaded the other woman, who was, however, as Dick could now see, only a girl of not to exceed eighteen years; "be brave, mother dear! We cannot do any good by giving way to our grief."

"You are right, miss," said Dick; "it will be better to accept the situation and bear up as best you can. I can sympathize with you, for the Tories murdered my father four years ago. I know about how you feel."

"Oh, that was indeed terrible!" said the girl, her voice trembling. "Oh, this cruel, cruel war!"

"We are fighting for our freedom, miss," said Dick, quietly, "and to people who are doing that the loss of lives does not cause so much pain as when they are killed by murderers in times of peace; we feel that we are losing our lives in a good cause, and even though we may not live to get the benefits, somebody will."

"That is true," the girl assented.

"But the loss of a loved one is hard to bear, under any circumstances," the woman said.

"That is true, too," acquiesced Dick; "but, now, what can we do to aid you? What will you do? Where will you go?"

"I hardly know," the woman replied, mournfully; "we have no relatives in this part of the country, and very few friends. The majority of the neighbors are Tories, and the few who are not are in constant fear of their lives, as we have been, and there is every likelihood that to-morrow may see them forced to go through with the same experience that has overtaken us to-day. So it would be folly to go to any of them—and it would not be fair to them, either, as it would prove them to be Whigs, and their Tory neighbors would mark them for prey at once."

"That is too bad," said Dick; "what can you do, then?"

"Mother, why may we not go to the cabin on the island in the swamp?" the girl asked. "You know what I mean. The cabin that father had built three years ago, but which we thought we would not have to occupy."

"We would be reasonably safe there," said the woman; "but we would starve to death, Stella."

"No, we wouldn't, mother. I can use a rifle as well as any man, and I could kill enough wild game to supply us with all necessary food."

Dick heard this talk with interest. "Where is this island?" he asked.

"It is about two miles from here," the girl replied; "it is in a big swamp, and there is only one way of getting onto the island—only one little, narrow strip of solid ground leading to it, and if we were on the island I think we would be safe, for I don't think there is a Tory in the neighborhood who knows how to get to the island, or, indeed, knows of its existence."

Dick was silent a few moments, thinking. He and his "Liberty Boys" were now practically at their journey's end; they were in the very region where Tarleton and his band of butchers had been and were doing their terrible work; here was where the work of the "Liberty Boys" would have to be done, and while doing it they would have to have some sort of hiding place—headquarters—where they could retire in case they were hard pressed and where they could feel reasonably safe if attacked by superior numbers. This island the girl spoke of might be the very best place in the world for them to have their headquarters, and by being there they could protect the two women, who could, in return, do what cooking was needful and thus both parties would be benefited. Dick decided to suggest the matter, anyway, and see what they thought of it. He did so, and both the mother and daughter approved of the plan; indeed, it was easy to see that they were overjoyed to think that they were to be protected in the future by this party of one hundred determined-looking young men. Their voices trembled as they thanked Dick for suggesting the plan, and when he told them who he was and who the others were, they were even more greatly pleased, for they had heard of Dick Slater and the "Liberty Boys."

So it was decided, and when Dick told the youths what they were going to do, they were well pleased also. "It is a good scheme, Dick," said Bob; "we will have to have some place for headquarters, and this promises to be a splendid retreat. I don't think we could do better if we were to hunt for a month."

This was the view taken by all the youths, and it was quickly decided to put the plan into execution; but before leaving, it would be necessary to bury the dead man. Dick asked the girl where a spade would be found, and she sent the boy to the stable, which had not been burned, and he brought a spade. It was a trying ordeal for all hands, but Mrs. Somers—that was the woman's name—and her daughter and son bore up remarkably well, and at last the entire party was moving away in the direction of the timber, which was half a mile distant.



They reached and entered the timber, and the three led the way, the youths following, leading their horses, for it would have been awkward work riding as the limbs hung low and there was considerable underbrush.

"Will it be possible for us to take our horses across onto the island, Mrs. Somers?" asked Dick.

"Yes," was the reply; "the strip of solid ground is about three feet wide, and a horse should be able to make its way along it without much difficulty."

"How large is the island?" he asked.

"Oh, it is quite large—there must be as much as ten acres of ground."

"That is good!"

After a walk of three-quarters of an hour they came to the edge of the swamp. The three continued in the lead, and the youths followed in single file, leading their horses. The animals snorted in a frightened manner, at first, their instinct seeming to warn them that danger threatened them, but presently, finding that the ground under their feet was solid, they moved along willingly enough.

The pathway crooked and turned and wound this way and that, so that it was at least a mile by the path to the island, while not more than two-thirds of a mile by direct line. This was not a bad feature, however, Dick reasoned; the more crooked the path the harder it would be for the Tories or redcoats to follow it if they tried to reach the island.

Near the centre of the island, where two large trees stood, was a good-sized cabin, and toward this the party made its way.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### "BLACK BOB" DOES SOME SPY WORK.

If ever there was a surprised, horrified and at the same time terrified man, it was the leader of the band of Tories that had been slain by the "Liberty Boys," Black Bob Gunderson. He had escaped being cut down almost as if by a miracle, and as the horsemen swept over and past him, he struggled to his feet and fled for his life. He succeeded in reaching the timber, after being fired at by several of the "Liberty Boys," as we have seen, and feeling that he was now safe he took refuge behind a tree and watched the strangers.

"I wonder who and what they are?" he thought. "They are demons to fight! Ugh! just look out there! I will wager that not a one of the boys is alive! I don't see how I escaped."

He remained hidden behind the tree till the youths rode away, and then he came forth, and, advancing, stood and gazed about him upon the dead bodies of his late comrades, with eyes of horror.

"Every one dead!" he muttered, huskily; "not a single mother's son uv 'em is alive! Jove! whut if they should take it into their heads to come back? They may have left one behind to watch and see if I showed myself! I guess I had better not stay here or I may lose my life! Most all the boys hev money in their pockets, though, an' I'm not goin' to go till I git et, even ef I do hev ter run the risk uv gittin' cut down."

He hastened from body to body and rifled the pockets, stopping every few moments to listen. He was afraid he would be interrupted, but his fears proved to be groundless, for he finished his work and got back within the friendly shelter of the surrounding timber without having been bothered. He breathed a sigh of relief and then muttered, half aloud: "Well, whur shall I go? I'm afraid ter go back to Tarleton, now, an' tell 'im thet I lost all my men. He would shoot me as like as not. No; I must go somewhur else an' wait till I git hold uv somethin' in the way uv news thet'll he'p me ter make peace with 'im. But whur kin I go?—I know. I'll go ter thet cabin on ther islan'—ther cabin Dave Somers built three yeers ergo. He hed no idee ennybuddy but his own folks knowed ennything erbout et, but I did; an' now my knowledge'll come in handy, fur et'll giv' me a good place ter stay fur a while till I fin' out who an' whut them fellers air whut cut ther boys down. An' when I fin' thet out I think I kin go ter Tarleton an' make peace with 'im fur losin' ther boys."

Black Bob hastened away through the timber, and after half an hour of brisk walking reached the point where the path led toward the island. He had been across several times, but was not yet very familiar with the crooks and turns, so had to go slowly. He finally reached the island, however, and with a breath of relief walked rapidly toward the cabin.

He had almost reached the cabin when he was startled by a loud, fierce cry which came from overhead, seemingly, and looking upward in alarm Gunderson saw a long, tawny body shooting down toward him from off a limb, about fifteen feet above his head. He knew what it was in an instant—a panther! It had been lying on the limb of



the big tree and had seen the man approaching, and had marked him for its prey, without a doubt.

But Black Bob had lived in this country for many years, and was, indeed, a hunter and trapper before he became a butcher under Tarleton, and he had encountered too many panthers to be badly frightened. He was not nearly so afraid of wild beasts as he was of human enemies. So now he was prompt to act.

He leaped aside with wonderful quickness, and the panther missed its intended prey, striking on the ground with considerable force. Black Bob had his musket in his hands, and had cocked it as he made his leap, and now he stuck the muzzle of the weapon against the animal's side and fired.

A heavy load of buckshot entered the panther's side, and penetrated to the heart, making a fatal wound. The animal gave utterance to a terrible screech, and began rolling, leaping and tumbling about in its death-struggle, and it would have gone hard with Black Bob had he gotten in reach of those terrible claws; but he was too shrewd for that, and had instantly leaped back out of the way, after firing. He knew what would follow the shot, for it was not the first time he had done a thing of this kind.

The panther soon ceased struggling, however, and tumbling over, straightened out and breathed its last. Black Bob advanced and looked down upon the dead animal, and then gave the carcass a kick, with the remark: "You tackled the wrong feller thet time, didn' yo?" Then after a few moments he added: "I wish yo' wuz er deer instid uv er no-count painter. I would hev sumthin' ter eat, then."

Then he entered the cabin. By leaving the door open he was enabled to see to get around very well, the moon-light flooding in and lighting up the interior of the cabin fairly well. At one side of the main room, built against the wall, were a couple of bunks, and Black Bob said to himself that he would be able to rest quite comfortably here. Presently he closed the door and threw himself down in one of the bunks. He lay there for perhaps half an hour, but could not get to sleep, and finally rose and stepping to the door, opened it and looked out.

What he saw almost froze the blood in his veins. Coming across the open space lying between the cabin and the edge of the swamp was a party of at least one hundred men. The men were leading horses, and instinctively Black Bob realized that this was the band of strangers who had exterminated his own party only a short time before.

"And there are a couple of women with them," he said to himself. "Ha! I'll bet ennythin' they air Mrs. Somers an' Stella! Yes, thet's who the wimmen air! But great guns! I'll hev ter be gittin' erway frum heer, er et'll be all up with me! I wunder ef I kin slip out uv ther door without them seein' me?"

Black Bob decided to try it, anyway, as there was no other means of exit from the cabin, and seizing his musket, he slipped through the open doorway, and hastening along the side of the cabin got around the corner.

"I don' b'leeve ennybuddy saw me," thought the Tory, with a sigh of relief; "but I'm goin' ter hev ter look out, er I won't get erway frum heer safe. Them fellers is dangerous customers, er I'm er liar! They air ther same chaps ez cut my boys down, I'm sartin, an' thet shows they air bad ones ter fool with."

Black Bob hardly knew what to do. He felt that the safest place for him would be to get back to the mainland; but he wished to learn who the strangers were, and where they were from, if possible, and was impelled to remain near the cabin, in the hope that he might succeed in learning what he wished to know.

He presently decided that the best thing he could do would be to get away, for the present, however, and then return to the vicinity of the cabin later on, after the newcomers had ceased examining their quarters and had settled down. Having thus decided, he hastened away across the open, being careful to keep the cabin between himself and the party.

He reached the little fringe of timber growing around the edge of the island, and took refuge behind a tree, with a breath of relief. "I'm all right now," he murmured. "Thunder! I thought I was getting away from them fellers by comin' ter this heer islan', but et seems I on'y run inter danger by doin' et. I never thort uv the fellers runnin' ercross Mrs. Somers an' Stella."

Black Bob remained in hiding for an hour, at least, during which time he saw the strangers moving about, and finally he saw that they had gone into camp. The horses had been tethered here and there, and were eating the grass with a relish, and at last the Tory made up his mind to try to approach the cabin and encampment close enough so that he could overhear the conversation of the strangers, and thus learn who and what they were.

In pursuance of this plan, he left his place of concealment and stole forward. He reached the cabin at last, and took up his position near the corner, and waited in the hope of hearing something that would be of interest to him, and of sufficient importance so that he could return



to Tarleton without being in danger of losing his life on account of the fate which had overtaken his men, and for which Tarleton would hold him responsible.

He had been in his new position only a few minutes when he was suddenly startled by hearing footsteps behind him, and he whirled around—to find himself in the grasp of half a dozen of the men whom he had come here to spy upon.

## CHAPTER V.

### "BLACK BOB" A PRISONER.

When Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys," following close upon the heels of Mrs. Somers, Stella and Sam, reached the cabin, the first thing that attracted their attention was the dead panther.

Dick and Bob examined the carcass, and found that the brute had been shot, and only recently at that.

"That means that some one has been here very recently," said Bob.

"You are right, Bob; and the chances are that the person, whoever he may be, is still on the island."

"Yes; he was probably here when we reached the island, but I'll wager he isn't here now."

"He is on the island, I'll wager, Bob; but if he was in the cabin he probably took fright, and fled when he saw us coming."

Some of the "Liberty Boys" had looked in the cabin at once, by Dick's direction, and had reported that it was empty.

"Well, whoever he is, we ought to try to recapture him," said Bob.

"We will catch him, never fear, Bob."

"How are we going to work it?"

"I am going to station three or four of the boys at the entrance to the path leading to the shore. Mrs. Somers says there is no other way of leaving the island, and we will be sure to nab him when he tries to escape."

"That's a good idea; but you had better get the boys stationed there as quickly as possible."

"I shall send them at once."

He did so, and then rested easy. "He can't get away from us now," he told Bob; "so we may as well get to work and make arrangements for a permanent camp."

There were two rooms in the cabin, and Mrs. Somers said that the small one would do for herself and daughter

Stella, and that Dick and some of his comrades should occupy the large room. Dick decided to do this, but insisted on fitting up the two bunks in the small room with some of the "Liberty Boys' " blankets. The woman and girl protested that they could get along with leaves and small boughs to lie on, but Dick would not hear to this.

"Such beds are good enough for us fellows," he said; "and you must accept of the blankets. We will soon get plenty more, for we are going to visit the homes of some of the Tories of this vicinity and levy toll on them, as Tarleton has been doing with the patriot people—only we will not burn houses and murder people. We shall simply take food and such articles of clothing and furniture as we will need here. This cabin shall be nicely and comfortably furnished in a short time."

Dick had instructed the boys to keep a sharp lookout for the man whom he was sure was lurking in the vicinity, and perhaps an hour after they had gone into camp one of the boys came to Dick and told him that a man was slipping across toward the rear of the cabin, he having come forth from the strip of timber at the edge of the swamp.

"Don't interfere with him," said Dick. "Let him reach the cabin, and then we will make a sudden dash around and capture him."

The youth nodded, and went back to tell his comrades what to do. Thus it happened that Black Bob, while fancying that he was playing the spy successfully, had been seen, and was himself being watched closely. And then, as we have seen, a half dozen of the youths suddenly made a dash around the corner of the cabin, and seized the Tory, who was taken wholly by surprise.

He struggled fiercely, and was such a powerful man that he gave the boys quite a tussle, but he could not get free, and they soon had him subdued. They tied his hands together behind his back, so as to make sure he would not be able to do any damage, and led him around to where the rest of the "Liberty Boys" were.

"Well, who are you?" asked Dick sternly, as he eyed the prisoner searchingly.

"Find out!" was the fierce reply.

"Very well; I shall do so. Bob, tell Mrs. Somers to come out here."

Black Bob started, and then spoke up: "Yo' needn't min'. Ef Mrs. Somers is heer yo'll fin' out who I am, enny-way, so I mought ez well tell yo' myse'f. My name's Bob Gunderson."

"Ah! Then you are the man they call 'Black Bob?'" Gunderson started, and gave Dick a fearful look.

"I guess I'm ther feller," he replied, slowly.



"Then you are the cowardly scoundrel who was in command of the force of Tories who burned the home of the Somerses, and murdered Mr. Somers!" Dick spoke very sternly.

The face of the prisoner paled. "Well, an' ef I am—then whut?" he asked, with an attempt at bravado.

"You ask what then?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll tell you. You have done enough cruel, fiendish work to-day to earn for yourself the hangman's rope, and there is only one thing in this world that will keep you from ending your days in that manner."

"What is thet?" It was evident that Black Bob was beginning to be very much frightened.

"You are a member of Tarleton's band, aren't you?"

Black Bob hesitated, but Dick stamped his foot, and said sternly: "Straight, truthful answers to all my questions is all that will save your neck, Black Bob. Answer at once."

"Waal, yes. I'm a member of Tarleton's band," was the slow, hesitating reply.

"Exactly. And you know considerable about him?"

"Waal, ye-es."

"You know where he is now?" Dick made this as a positive statement, yet he said it in such a way as to imply a question, and Black Bob stammeringly acknowledged that he did.

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "Now tell me where Tarleton's place of rendezvous is."

Black Bob hesitated, and then said: "I couldn't tell yo' jes' whur et is, espeshully ef yo' hain't familiar w' h this part uv ther kentry. Yo' wouldn't know enny more erbout et than yo' did afore."

"I suppose you could show us where it is?"

The man looked worried. "Yas, I could do thet," he admitted reluctantly.

"But you wouldn't like to do so, eh?"

"Yer right erbout thet. Ef Tarleton wuz ter fin' out I done sech er thing, et would be all up with me."

"Well, it is going to be all up with you, anyway, so you might as well make up your mind to show us where Tarleton's headquarters is. By so doing you may escape with your life, as Tarleton will have to catch you before he can hurt you, while I already have you, and will hang you if you refuse."

Black Bob was evidently worried. He studied for a few minutes, and then said: "I guess I'll do whut yo' wants me to."

"You are wise in so deciding," said Dick. "Otherwise you would never leave this place alive."

"Say, how did yo' fellers come ter know I wuz behin' ther cabin, ennyhow?" asked Black Bob curiously.

Dick laughed. "We are hard fellows to fool when it comes to finding out whether or not there are enemies around, Black Bob," he said. "It was really simple, however."

"I don' understan' how yo' knowed ennybuddy wuz aroun'."

Dick smiled. "That was a pretty good-sized panther you shot here under this tree, Mr. Gunderson," he said, in a calm, matter-of-fact way.

Black Bob started, and an exclamation escaped him.

"Uv course," he cried, in a disgusted tone. "Whut a fool I wuz! I mought hev knowed thet ther dead panther would tell yo' somebuddy hed been heer not long afore yo' come."

"You are right. Why, the panther was scarcely cold yet. We know that somebody was here on the island, and I sent some of the boys to stand guard at the entrance to the path leading to the mainland. You could not have escaped if you had tried."

Black Bob stared at Dick in a wondering manner. "Waal, I'll be jiggered!" he gasped. "I guess yo' fellers air erbout ez smart ez they make 'em, hey?"

"Oh, it was all simple and plain as a, b, c."

"Waal, ter ennybuddy thet is used ter readin' whut is wrote in thet fashun et wuz easy enuff; but et hain't everybuddy ez kin do et. Lots uv ther ordinary sojers wouldn't ever a-thort uv thet ertall."

"British soldiers would not, perhaps; but there are very few patriot soldiers who would not have known how to interpret the finding of the dead panther."

"Mebby yo' air right."

"I am sure I am; and now, Black Bob, how many men has Tarleton?"

The man shook his head. "I kain't say. Sometimes he hez not more'n one hunderd, an' then at other times he hez five er six hunderd. He keeps 'em scattered out in parties, an' so et hain't very often thet they air all with 'im at ther same time."

"I understand; but about what is the average number that is on hand, as a rule?"

"Waal, I should say erbout two hunderd."

"Good! We can handle two hundred, I think."

Black Bob looked around, and made mental note of the number of the young patriots. "There hain't more'n er hunderd uv 'em," he thought. "Blazes, but thet feller



mus' think they air fighters, ef he thinks thet one hundred kin whip two hundred uv Tarleton's men."

He had yet to learn that the "Liberty Boys" were more terrible as fighters than even the men of the terrible Tarleton. Dick ordered that Black Bob's legs be bound, and then he was placed at a little distance, where he could not overhear what was said, and Dick and his comrades held a council of war.

"We must make a lively fight against Tarleton, and put a stop to his terrible work, or at least check it," said Dick; "and I am in for going after him at once, if he isn't too far from his headquarters. What do the rest of you say?"

The rest were in for it. "The quicker we get a chance at Tarleton's butchers the better I shall like it," declared Bob, and the rest nodded their heads to signify that they thought the same way about the matter.

"I will go and ask Black Bob how far it is to Tarleton's headquarters," said Dick. He did so, and returned with the information that the fellow said it was about five miles.

"That isn't far," said Bob. "We can leave our horses here and go afoot."

"I think that will be best," agreed Dick. "And I will leave five or six of you boys here to keep guard, and see that no one comes here to bother Mrs. Somers and her daughter."

Knowing that all the boys wished to be of the party that went after Tarleton Dick cut slips of paper and marked on six of them. The slips he placed in his hat, and all drew. "The ones drawing the slips that are marked will remain behind," he said.

In this way there could be no ill feeling, and the six who drew the slips, while disappointed, had nothing to say, but acquiesced.

Half an hour later the "Liberty Boys," with Black Bob for a guide, started on their dangerous adventure. Dick had warned the Tory. "If you make an attempt to escape it will be your death warrant," he told the fellow. "I shall keep a pistol in my hand, and will shoot you with as little compunction as if you were a mad dog."

Black Bob protested that he would not think of such a thing as trying to escape, but he lied even as he said it, for that very thought had been in his mind, and even after the warning he said to himself that he would escape if he got the shadow of a chance.

The party wended its way in single file along the narrow, crooked path, and presently succeeded in reaching the mainland. Then, with Black Bob in the lead, and Dick

and Bob immediately behind him, pistols in hand, and the rest following closely, the party made its way through the timber.

They walked onward at a fair pace for an hour or more, and then they came to the mouth of a dark and narrow defile. Here Black Bob paused.

"Yo'll hev ter be moughty keerful frum now on," he said to Dick. "This heer gully leads right up ter Tarleton's headquarters."

"How far is it?" asked Dick.

"Erbout er half mile."

"And there are sentinels on guard at the point where the gully reaches the encampment?"

"Yas, thar's allus two men on guard thar."

"So I supposed. Well, lead on. Go slowly, and when I tell you to stop, do so."

"All right: come erlong."

They moved forward, and walked steadily onward for about a quarter of a mile. Dick was just on the point of telling Black Bob to stop, when the scoundrel suddenly leaped to one side, and darted into the opening leading to a little side ravine. It was so dark in this little ravine that the fellow was out of sight in an instant. Dick gave utterance to an exclamation of anger and half raised his pistol to fire, but lowered it again, and said to Bob, who had started to do likewise: "No, don't fire. It will give Tarleton warning. Let us see if we can catch the slippery rascal."

They darted into the ravine, and followed it a little ways, only to quickly make up their minds that it would be folly and only a loss of valuable time to catch Black Bob, so they gave up the chase and hastened back to where the rest of the boys were.

"We will move forward at a double-quick, fellows," said Dick, "and try to get to the encampment ahead of Black Bob, and surprise Tarleton. Come on."

Dick bounded away up the gully, followed by his brave "Liberty Boys." They might be going straight into a death-trap, but they did not hesitate. They had come this far, and they would not go back without having some sort of a fight with the enemy, if enemy there was.

Onward they dashed.

## CHAPTER VI.

TARLETON IS GIVEN A TASTE OF HIS OWN MEDICINE.

Black Bob was a daring and tricky scoundrel. He had made up his mind right from the very first that he would try to escape, and he had done so.



He did not believe that Dick and his comrades would fire upon him as he leaped away, for the very reason that they did not—the fear that they would warn Tarleton that danger was near. The result proved that his judgment was good, and he chuckled aloud as he dashed down the little ravine.

"Safe!" he muttered; "I'm er free man, an' I kin git ter Tarleton afore they kin, an' warn 'im; an' w'en they come we kin give et ter 'em in er way they won't like! Ha, ha, ha! they didn't know who they wuz foolin' with w'en they thort ter make me do jes' whut they wanted me ter do!"

He did not follow the ravine far, but turned sharp to one side and bounded up the side. It was not so steep but that he could do this without much trouble. Reaching the summit he started down the slope beyond and ran at the best speed of which he was capable. Down the slope and up another he ran, and this slope was much longer than the other, so it was hard work getting up it. He finally succeeded, however, and below him he saw the fires which signified the presence of a party of men in camp.

"He is here, shore enuff!" the man panted. "Waal, I'm five minutes ahead uv them thar rebels, an' thet ought ter give Tarleton enuff warnin'."

Down the slope he started, at a good pace, but it was very steep and his pace grew swifter in spite of his efforts to check the speed. Downward he dashed, faster and faster, and then his foot tripped over a stone and he turned a somersault forward and went rolling over and over until he reached the bottom, where he came within an ace of rolling into one of the camp-fires which had been built close to the wall of the bluff.

A dozen men were seated not far from the fire, talking and laughing, but the sudden descent of the human meteor put a stop to this, and they leaped to their feet in amazement and terror, and drew pistols.

"Who in thunder air yo'?" cried one. "An' whut d'yo' mean by tumblin' in onter us in this heer fashun?"

The newcomer leaped to his feet, and, wild-eyed and excited-looking, exclaimed: "I am Black Bob Gunderson! Whur is Tarleton?"

"Black Bob!"

"Great fish-hooks!"

"Whut's ther matter?"

"Whur's ther res' uv ther boys?"

Such were a few of the exclamations given vent to, but Black Bob uttered an impatient cry. "I hain't no time ter answur questions," he said; "I want ter know if ther

boss is heer, an' whur he is. Thar's er ban' uv rebels comin' up ther gully ter attack yo' uns!"

"Thunder!"

"Blazes!"

"W'y didn' yo' say so afore?"

"Ther boss is over yender, in thet tent!"

The men leaped to their feet in a hurry—those who had not already done so, and grabbed up their muskets, while Black Bob rushed across toward where the tent was. He reached it and rushed in without ceremony.

"A ban' uv rebels is comin'!" he cried, and the inmate of the tent, who had leaped to his feet in evident alarm when Black Bob burst in upon him, cried out: "Oh, it's you, Black Bob! How far away is this band?"

"Et mus' be clost at han' now! Et'll be heer in er minnet!"

Instantly Tarleton became very much alive. "Come!" he cried; "we must get the boys in shape for repulsing the rebels!"

He darted out of the tent, followed closely by Black Bob, and he began calling out commands to the officers and men, in a loud, energetic tone of voice.

"To arms!" he yelled; "to arms! and get ready to repulse the rebels! They are almost upon us!"

The men leaped up from where they were lying or sitting—many of them had been lying down, asleep—and leaped for their muskets.

At this instant there came the sharp reports of two muskets from the direction of the point where the gully opened into the little basin in which was the encampment, and a cry escaped the lips of Tarleton.

"They are upon us!" he yelled. "Up and at them, men! Kill the scoundrelly rebels!"

He dashed toward the point from which the musket shots had sounded, and his men did likewise, and as they approached the mouth of the gully they met the two sentinels running wildly back into the basin.

"The gully is full of rebels!" yelled one; "there must be a thousand uv 'em! Run for your lives, men! Run!"

Tarleton paused, amazed and horrified. "A thousand!" he gasped; "surely not! There must be some mistake—Black Bob," suddenly turning to that individual, "how many are there of the rebels?"

"Not more than a hundred," was the prompt reply.

"Are you positive?"

"Yas, I know et."

"We can eat them up!" shouted Tarleton. "Stand your ground, men! There is only a hundred of them. The first man that starts to run I will shoot dead!"



The men knew this was no idle threat, and they turned their faces toward the gully, and at this instant a body of men came rushing out and toward them. Before the Tories could fire, the newcomers poured a terrible volley into their ranks, and a number of Tarleton's men went down, to rise no more.

"At them!" cried the loud, clear voice of Dick Slater; "at the scoundrelly Tories, and shoot them down like dogs!"

A wild cheer went up from the "Liberty Boys." "Down with the king!" they cried. "Long live Liberty!"

Forward they dashed, and having fired their muskets they drew their pistols and fired four volleys, one after the other, in rapid succession, almost before the Tories could realize what was going on. Tarleton roared out for his men to "Fire!" but his voice was drowned by the noise made by the firing, and his men did not hear the command. A few of them did draw pistols and fire a few scattering shots, however, but did no particular damage.

Dick Slater was a youth who had the qualities which make a great general. He was as cool, always, as if seated beside the camp-fire eating his supper, and this enabled him to see just how matters were going. He realized that he and his brave "Liberty Boys" had the Tories "rattled," so to speak, and that all that was necessary was to follow up the advantage they had gained and give it to the scoundrels while they had the opportunity, so he cried out for the youths to "Charge bayonets!"

The Tories heard the command, and were seized with a terrible, an overpowering fear. Who were these terrible fighters? they asked themselves, and then they made up their minds that it would be folly to try to stand before them, and, turning, they took to their heels and ran like scared rabbits.

Tarleton shrieked and yelled for them to stop and stand their ground, but it is doubtful if the men heard him; or, if, hearing him, they understood. Certainly they did not obey the commands, but continued running with all their might. It was evident that they were mad with fear, and that nothing could stay their headlong flight. Indeed, Tarleton was run against and upset once or twice by his own men, and realizing that he would soon be left alone, and that there was little doubt that he would then be captured, he, too, took refuge in flight, and cursing bitterly at every leap, he ran in the same direction taken by his men.

The victorious "Liberty Boys," uttering wild cheers, followed at the heels of the fleeing Tories, and cut down a number of them, but finally paused when the farther side

of the basin was reached. "Down with the king!" they shouted after the fugitives; "long live Liberty!" and then they turned and made their way back across the basin to the mouth of the gully. Here they paused, and Dick told the boys to reload their muskets and pistols.

"They may take it into their heads to return and give us a fight," he said; "and if they do we will be ready to give them a warm reception."

The youths reloaded their weapons, doing so in a remarkably short space of time, and then they stood there and listened for quite a while. Not a sound could they hear to indicate the presence in the vicinity of the Tories however, and so Dick, feeling satisfied with the result of the expedition and encounter, gave the order to start on the return trip to the island.

"I'm afraid that they might try to get back to the island and meet us there when we get there," he said to Bob; "you know, Black Bob is with Tarleton, and knows all about the island and how to reach it."

"That's so; but I hardly think they would think to try any such game as that, Dick. They are too badly frightened."

"They were scared, sure enough."

"Why, I never saw such a rattled gang in all my life! And those were some of the terrible Tarleton 'butchers,' too!"

"I guess they think they have encountered a rather lively crowd," smiled Dick.

"There can be no doubt regarding that. Say, I wouldn't have believed we could have charged right into their stronghold, and fought them to a standstill, and then put them to flight without them doing us some serious damage, would you, Dick?"

"No; I was greatly surprised. But we took them pretty much by surprise, and they were sleepy and muddled, and we got them dazed, and so it was easy to keep them from doing any damage."

"Two of the boys were wounded slightly, and that is all the damage the Tories inflicted, Dick."

"We got off very lucky, indeed."

The party made its way down the gully, and, emerging from the mouth, started through the timber. The youths had thought it possible that the Tories would try to ambush them at the mouth of the gully, but nothing was seen or heard of the enemy, and they moved onward through the timber, in high spirits.

They walked onward for an hour, and then began to look around for the point where the path led to the island



in the swamp. They were moving slowly along, looking carefully, when they were suddenly startled by a loud voice, which called out: "Halt! Stand where you are and give an account of yourselves! Who are you, and what are you doing here? Don't attempt to do anything rash, for we have you surrounded; and at the first attempt to use your weapons we shall open fire! Answer! Who and what are you?"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE "LIBERTY BOYS" ARE SURPRISED.

Dick and his comrades were taken wholly by surprise. They had not suspected the presence in the immediate vicinity of anybody save themselves, and the words of the unknown speaker startled them not a little. There was something in the firm ring of the clear, resonant voice that told the hearers that the owner of the voice was a fellow who meant business. They knew, without having seen him, that he was one whom it would be dangerous to fool with.

Dick was a very shrewd youth, however. He somehow got the idea into his head that the speaker, whoever he might be, was not an enemy, and he called out: "We have no intention of trying to use our weapons, so you need not think of opening fire. As to who and what we are—I think we are friends."

"That remains to be seen. What are you, patriots or Tories?"

This was all the cue Dick needed. No redcoat or Tory would speak of the patriots as "patriots"; they would, without fail, have addressed them as "rebels"; so Dick had no hesitation in answering: "We are patriots; and now, who and what are you?"

"You say you are patriots?" ignoring Dick's question. "We are."

"Humph! Do you know, I believe you are lying?"

This was frank, certainly, but instead of getting angry, Dick laughed—much to the surprise of Bob, who was angered and ready to fight at the drop of the hat—and he called out, in a calm, pleasant voice: "I assure you, sir, that we have not told you anything but the truth. Why should you think we are doing otherwise?"

"Because a horrible outrage has recently been committed in this neighborhood, and I believe you are the

fellows who did it!" The tone was fierce, accusing and threatening.

"A family has been murdered, and their home burned and pillaged!" The voice trembled and almost broke for an instant, and Dick, who was skilled in reading things in the tones of the human voice, said to himself that the speaker was greatly moved by some emotion. "Probably sorrow," the youth said to himself; "he is in all probability a friend of the murdered family." And then a thought struck him. "Perhaps he has reference to the Somers family!" he thought. "If so, I can speedily fix matters with him." Aloud he said:

"Do you have reference to the Somers home and family?"

"Yes, yes!" was the reply. "Ah, I knew I was right! You are the cowardly, the dastardly murderers; and, oh, but we will wreak a terrible vengeance upon you! Not one of you shall leave this place alive!"

"You are quite mistaken," said Dick. "We are not the party that did that."

"Who did it, then?"

"A party of Tarleton's butchers."

"I was sure of that; but I am also sure that you are some of those same butchers!"

"No, you are mistaken. We are patriot soldiers; and, in fact, we put to death every man of the party that burned Mr. Somers' home and killed him, with the exception of one man, who escaped us."

"Who killed Mr. Somers, you say?"

"Yes."

"They killed all the members of the family, did they not?"

"No; Mrs. Somers and Stella and Sam are alive and safe."

"Are you speaking the truth?" The tone of the speaker's voice was thrilled with feeling. It was plain that the owner of the voice was stirred by some strong emotion.

"Of course I am speaking the truth. Why shouldn't I?"

"I don't know; but if you are not Tarleton's men, who are you?"

"Did you ever hear of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?" asked Dick.

"Yes, yes!" was the reply; "but you are not—surely you are not, you cannot be 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"And why not?"

"Because they have operated in the North. They are not in the South."

"That is where you are mistaken. We are certainly the 'Liberty Boys,' and we are in the South."



There was no immediate reply from the unseen speaker, but the youths heard the murmur of voices, and it was evident that several of the strangers were conferring together and talking the matter over.

"They don't know whether to believe us or not, Dick," said Bob.

"I judge you are right, Bob."

"I wonder who they are, anyway?" remarked Mark Morrison.

"I don't know," said Dick. "One thing is certain; if they are friends, and I think they are, they may be of service to us in our campaign against Tarleton."

"That's right."

Just then the voice was heard again: "You say that Mrs. Somers and Stella and Sam are alive and well?"

"Yes," replied Dick. "They are alive and well."

"And only Mr. Somers was killed, then?"

"Only Mr. Somers."

"Where are Mrs. Somers and Stella and Sam?"

"Well, now, I'll have to tell you something, my friend," said Dick quietly. "I shall answer no such question as that until after I have been assured that you are their friends. How do I know that you are not their enemies, who wish to know where they are in order to do them injury?"

"Why, good heavens, man! I am to be the husband of Stella Somers, so you may know that we are their friends."

"Aha! So sits the wind in that quarter," murmured Dick, while exclamations escaped the lips of his comrades. "I more than half suspected it." Aloud he said: "So you are Stella Somers' affianced husband?"

"I am," was the firm reply.

"What is your name?"

"Harry Martin."

"Where do you live?"

"Two miles from here, and about the same distance from the late home of the Somerses."

"Who is with you?"

There was silence for a few moments, and then the reply came: "A lot of young men of the vicinity, who have joined me to aid me in visiting revenge on the heads of the villains who murdered the Somers family."

"Very good; supposing we all step out and show ourselves? We are friends, so there is no need of being so careful."

"Very well; I am willing. I feel sure, now, that you have told the truth, and that you are the 'Liberty Boys,' as you said."

"You are right; we are the 'Liberty Boys.'"

A few moments later the youths were confronted by a party of young men of about their own age, who came out in an open space where the moon shone down through and lighted things up. Dick saw that their number did not exceed fifty of the young men, and turning to their leader he said, with a smile: "You were pretty bold to attempt to hold up a party of twice your strength."

"We were desperate, and ready to fight to the death," was the reply; "but are you, indeed, the noted scout, spy and fighter, Dick Slater?"

"My name is Dick Slater; the rest of it you can leave off."

"Oh, but we have heard of your doings, even away down here in South Carolina; and, do you know, I am glad that I can say that I have met you. And these are the 'Liberty Boys?'" and he indicated the youths.

"Yes, these are the 'Liberty Boys.'"

Then the young man, Harry Martin, got back to the subject nearest his heart. "You have not yet told me where Mrs. Somers and Stella and Sam are," he said.

"They are not far from here."

"But where?"

"They are on an island in the swamp."

"On an island in the swamp?"

"Yes."

Then an exclamation escaped the lips of the young man. "I know now," he declared. "Stella told me, a long time ago, that her father had built a cabin on an island in the swamp, for them to retreat to in case the Tories got too bad, and I judge that is the place where they are now."

"You are right; at least that is what they told me—that the cabin had been built by Mr. Somers for a retreat in case they were forced to leave their own home."

"It is the same place. And, say, Mr. Slater, may I and my comrades accompany you there?"

"Certainly; and I will say that I am very glad that we ran across you, Mr. Martin. We were sent down here by the commander-in-chief to protect the patriot families of this vicinity and to make things warm for Tarleton and his butchers, and as we have only one hundred men, we shall be glad to have your assistance, if you can see your way to joining us."

"We shall be only too glad to work in conjunction with you, Mr. Slater," was the prompt reply. "We cannot be with you all the time, but we live near at hand, and will always be ready to flock to your assistance, if you need us."

"Well, that will help some, but, of course, it would be



better if you could be with us all the time; then I should have again more men whom I could depend upon."

"Well, it may be that the majority of the boys can be with you steadily. I can, and will remain with you—after going home and explaining things to the folks, of course—and I doubt not that many of the boys will do the same."

"Yes, yes!" was the cry from a number.

"Well, come along, and we will talk the matter over at greater length after we have reached our encampment on the island," said Dick. "We are on our way to headquarters now, after a successful encounter with Tarleton in his rendezvous up in the hills."

The two parties of young men now made their way along, talking in the most friendly way imaginable, and Dick told Harry Martin, who walked by his side, the story of their attack on Tarleton, and how they had routed his force completely, killing and wounding quite a number.

Harry was delighted, and expressed himself to that effect. "Jove! I wish I had been along with you!" he exclaimed. "I would like to get in a few blows on Tarleton's men for the sake of Stella, whose father they murdered."

"Stay with us, and you will get the chance," said Dick, quietly.

"That is just what I shall do."

They moved onward, going slowly, for Dick did not know exactly where the path was that led to the island, and had to search for it. Finally it was found, and the two parties crossed to the island.

"What success did you have, Dick?" asked the sentinel eagerly.

"The best in the world, Tom," was the reply. "We found Tarleton, and routed his men, killing and wounding a number, and not one of our boys was killed, and only two slightly wounded."

"Hurrah! That is good! I wish I had been along."

"I wish you could have been with us, Tom."

They passed on, and were soon at the cabin. It was now past midnight, and Mrs. Somers and Stella retired, so at Dick's invitation the youths decided to remain till morning, as Harry did not wish to disturb the slumbers of the two, and neither did he wish to leave until after he had seen Stella.

"We will remain here till morning," he said; "and then we will go to our homes and have a talk with our parents, and as many of us as can will come back and join your force, and stay with you as long as you stay in this part of the country."

"Very well; that is satisfactory," said Dick.

When Stella Somers found that Harry Martin had come she was delighted, and Dick saw to it that the lovers had an hour to themselves in the house, with no one to bother them but Stella's mother, who was very careful to have work to do in her own and Stella's room, leaving the two together in the big room. It is unnecessary to set down in detail what the two said; it may safely be left to the imagination of the reader. Suffice to say that when the interview was over Harry emerged from the cabin looking radiant. He was undoubtedly very happy. The recent death of her father, whom she loved with all a daughter's love, cast a damper over her spirits, of course.

Harry and his comrades then took their departure, he first assuring Dick that he would return, and stating it as his belief that the majority of the boys would also come back.

The young men were gone perhaps twenty minutes when they came hurrying back.

"What is the trouble?" asked Dick, as they drew near.

"We couldn't get away," was the startling reply. "Tarleton and a big force are on guard at the end of the path where it reaches the mainland, and I was told to come back and tell you, and to say that you might as well surrender, as you could not by any possibility escape!"

"Tarleton and his men, eh?" remarked Dick quietly. "Well, it does look a bit dubious for us, doesn't it?"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### TARLETON IN A RAGE.

"I should say that it does," agreed Harry, a blue look on his face.

"Well, there is one good thing about this," said Dick, "and that is that Tarleton's men can't get across to the island in sufficient numbers to do us any hurt."

"No; but neither can you get off the island; and they say that they will remain where they are, and keep up the siege, and that you will be forced to surrender on account of not having food or water."

"So that's their scheme, is it?"

"Yes; and it seems to be a good one, doesn't it?"

Dick nodded, a reflective look on his face. "Yes, it does seem to be a good scheme, a winning scheme," he said slowly. "Still, one never knows what may be done till one tries. We may be able to get off the island in



some manner without having to go by way of the path over which they are keeping watch and ward."

Harry shook his head. "I have lived in this part of the country all my life," he said dubiously, "and I know something about these swamps. 'I don't believe that you could possibly get through anywhere save where the solid path is. The mud is like glue, and once it gets hold it refuses to let go. It keeps sucking whatever it get hold of downward until it is pulled clear under. I have known where horses, cows and hogs have been lost in this manner.'"

A sober look settled on Dick's face. "It does seem as if we are in for it," he said slowly. "Still, we will not despair. One thing is certain, we shall not surrender to Tarleton until after we are fully convinced that no other course remains to us."

"That's the way to talk, Dick," said Bob. "The scoundrel would murder us all in cold blood, anyway, and I, for one, don't approve of surrendering even as a last resort. If we find there is absolutely no way of escape for us, then we can make a dash across the path, and try to kill some of the butchers before losing our own lives."

"I am with you in that, Bob," declared Mark Morrison, and the rest of the youths nodded to signify that they, too, thought the same way.

At first Dick thought of keeping the knowledge of the danger which threatened away from Mrs. Somers and Stella, but finally he made up his mind that we would have to tell them, sooner or later, anyway, so he told them why Harry and his companions had returned. The two showed that they were brave by not taking on to any very great extent. "We will hope for the best," said Mrs. Somers.

Dick at once began making arrangements to see if there could be anything done to checkmate the Tories, who, as the matter now stood, seemed to have decidedly the best of the situation.

He stationed sentinels along the strip of solid ground at various points, for a distance of two-thirds of the way across the mainland. "Now, if they should try to sneak in upon us they will get the worst of it," he said with satisfaction. "If we can't get away, they can't get at us, so we are not in as bad shape as we might be."

Then he called to Bob to come with him, and they made their way over to the edge of the island, and began making careful examinations of the swamp all along. "It might be possible that we could find another point where we could cross to the mainland," he said.

"We might find another way of getting off the island, true," said Bob. "Jove! I wish we could! Do you know,

Dick, I'd give a farm if we could do that and attack the scoundrels when they were not expecting it. Wouldn't that be great?"

"It would, indeed, Bob."

"Let's look closely, old man. If there is a way of getting off the island and getting at Tarleton's butchers I want that we shall find it."

"And so do I."

Tarleton was perhaps as mad a man as ever lived when he finally succeeded in getting his frightened and demoralized men to stop their headlong flight, after they had been attacked and routed by Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys."

"Oh, you cowards!" he almost shouted. "You poor, mean, miserable, chicken-hearted poltroons! To run like a pack of sheep, or—or—rabbits, from a gang that was inferior as regards numbers to your force! Oh, you—you—pusilanimous curs! I feel like murdering the whole lot of you! To think that Tarleton's men—with Tarleton himself in command—should be driven away in such a fashion by a gang of youngsters! It is maddening!"

Tarleton was, indeed, in a terrible rage. He tore his hair, and almost foamed at the mouth. The men were silent in terror. They did not know what he might do. They did not put it beyond him to put his threat into effect, and murder them all; and in such awe did they stand of him that he could doubtless have done this had he so willed; but after a while he became calmer, and could talk in a moderate tone of voice. Then he ordered the men to follow him.

"We will return at once," he said, "and if by any chance we should find those scoundrels there you are to go at them, and not let up till every mother's son of them is dead—do you hear? No quarter! Kill every one of them! And the first man of you who shows the white feather will be shot dead by my own hand. Do you hear?"

The men heard, and understood, too. They realized that they would have to fight to the death if they again encountered the party that put them to flight.

They made their way back to their encampment, but found that the enemy had gone. And if the truth were known the majority of the Tories drew breaths of relief when they found that this was the case—though they were careful to make the breaths of relief inaudible, so as to guard against Tarleton hearing them.

Tarleton strode about, looking at the dead men and listening to the groans of the wounded as their comrades were moving them to points where they could be taken



care of, and muttered to himself, and shook his fist at imaginary foes. The men were very careful to keep out of his way, for they did not know but to attract his attention to them might result in their losing their heads.

Presently a thought struck Tarleton, and he called out for Black Bob Gunderson to come to him at once. Black Bob tremblingly obeyed. "I guess ez how 't I'm in fur et now!" he thought dismally. "Blazes! but I wisht I wuzn't heer!"

But he was there, and had to face the music. "Whut d'ye want uv me?" he asked, as he approached. He had already made up his mind that if Tarleton attempted to draw a pistol or sword he would take to his heels and run for his life.

"How did you know those rebels were coming, Gunderson?" was the sharp, brusque query that came from Tarleton's lips.

"W'y, you see, I wuz with 'em," he stammered; "I——"  
"You were with them?" There was a rising inflection, and surprise and anger commingled, in the tone of Tarleton's voice as he asked the question.

"Yas, I wuz with 'em. Yo' see, I wuz made er pris'ner by 'em, an'——"

"You were made a prisoner?"

"Yas, an——"

"Stop! Where are your men, Black Bob?"

The man was frightened, but he made up his mind to tell the truth, and so he replied: "They air dead."

"Dead?"

"Yas."

"Who killed them?"

"This same gang whut wuz heer a leetle w'ile ergo."

"The same gang, eh?" Tarleton's voice was hoarse with passion.

"Yas."

"How did it happen?"

Black Bob told him. "We wuz settin' aroun' our camp-fire, talkin' an eatin' our supper, an' not thinkin' uv danger," he said, "an' suddenly heer cum er ban' uv er hundred men, an' they swooped right over us an' split ther heads uv every one uv ther boys, excep' me. How I escaped I dunno, but I did, an'——"

"But I thought you just said that you were made a prisoner by this gang."

"I wuz, but not till later on. I got erway then, but I went over onter an' islan' in ther swamp ter hide, an' by blazes ef they didn't come ter ther very islan' I wuz on, and they caught me an' made er pris'ner uv me."

"Oh, that was the way of it?"

"Yas."

"And that was the way they learned where my headquarters is, eh—you led them here?" There was deadly menace in the tone, but Black Bob felt that it was a case of "in for a lamb, in for a sheep," and so he acknowledged that that was the truth.

"But I didn't inten' ter let 'em git er chance at yo'," he hastened to say; "I made up my min' thet I would lead 'em purty near heer, an' then git erway an' come an' warn yo', so thet yo' could be ready fur 'em an' kill ther hull gang."

Tarleton was silent for a few moments, during which time he was thinking rapidly. Black Bob watched him closely and anxiously. He did not know as yet whether or not he was to be forced to dodge a bullet or the sweep of a sword blade. Presently Tarleton looked up and fixed Black Bob with his eyes.

"You say you were captured on an island in a swamp?" he asked.

"Yas."

"What is your opinion? Will these fellows, whoever they are, take up their quarters there for any length of time, do you think?"

Black Bob nodded. "I'm shore they will," he said.

"What makes you sure of it?"

"'Cause thar is er cabin on ther islan', an' et is a fine place ter hev headquarters."

"A cabin on the island?" Tarleton was surprised.

"Yas."

"How came it there?"

"Et wuz built by Dave Somers, who lived not fur frum whar I used ter live. He built et two or three yeers ergo, fur er retreat in case he wuz made leave his home by his loyal neighbors."

"Ah, that is it?"

"Yas."

"And this man Somers; is he living in the cabin on the island?"

"No; but his wife an' darter an' son air."

"Ah! Where is he, then?"

"He's dead."

"Dead?"

"Yas; we killed 'im this arternoon, an' burnt his house."

"Oh, that is it, eh?"

"Yas; an' these heer strangers, whoever they air, come ercross Mrs. Somers an' her darter an' son, and went with 'em ter ther islan'; an' I think they hev made et up ter use ther islan' ez er place ter stay."



"I doubt not that you are right; and there is little doubt that they have gone straight back to the island."

"Oh, uv course thet is jes' whur they went."

"I suppose you can lead me to the island?" queried Tarleton.

"Oh, yas!" replied Black Bob, eagerly. "I know ther way."

"Good! But when we get there is it possible for us to take them by surprise?"

Black Bob shook his head. "No, yo' kain't do thet," he said; "an' whut is wuss, yo' kain't git at 'em ertall."

"Can't get at them at all?" Tarleton was surprised, and puzzled as well.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Waal, yo' see, this heer islan' is connected with ther mainlan' by jes' one narrer path, an' et would be impossorble fur us ter git ercross ter ther islan' without bein' shot to peeces. The sentinels would see us an' give ther 'alarm, yo' know, an' ez we'd be all strung out in er string, they'd hev ther 'dvantage uv us."

"But couldn't we wade through the mud and all reach the island at the same time and make a concerted attack?"

Black Bob shook his head. "No; ther mud thet surrounds thet islan' is diffrunt from mos' places I hev ever seen. Et is jes' like glue, an' wunst et gits holt et holds on like grim death. I got stuck in et wunst, right clost ter ther edge, ez luck would hev et, an' by gittin' hol' uv er bush an' pullin' myse'f ashore, an' leavin' my boots behin' I managed ter escape. Yo' see, et sucks things right down inter et. W'y, I've seen hogs an' even cows an' hosses go down in thet mud, el'ar outer sight!"

"A sort of quicksand as well as mud!" Tarleton exclaimed. Then he studied a while, after which he said: "I have it. We will go and guard the path where it touches the mainland, and not let any one come ashore. Those rebels will run out of food and water soon, and will then have to surrender. That is the game to play, and it will work, without a doubt."

"Yas, et'll work, I'm shore," agreed Black Bob; "one thing is sartin, they won't be able ter git off'n ther islan'."

Tarleton, as soon as the dead men had been buried, detailed a few men to remain in the encampment to take care of the wounded, and then with the rest set out for the island in the swamp. They reached their destination about two o'clock in the morning and immediately went into camp in the timber at the edge of the swamp at the point where the path led to the island.

Tarleton sent Black Bob on a scouting expedition along

the pathway, as he was the only one who knew its crook and turns, and that worthy returned after an absence of half an hour and reported that the path was guarded by two sentinels and that it would be impossible to reach the island without arousing the force there, and being shot down as they came.

"Very well," said Tarleton; "we will not make the attempt, but will camp right here and keep them cooped up on the island till they are starved into surrendering. It will be slower, but safer than attacking, and will be all right, on the whole."

He placed four sentinels on guard at the entrance to the path, and then the rest of the force wrapped themselves in blankets and went to sleep.

Next morning, after they had eaten breakfast, the sentinels caught sight of a party of men approaching along the pathway, and sent word to their commander. He told them to let the newcomers come on and if there were not too many of them, to let them come ashore, where they could be captured, but one of the sentinels accidentally exposed himself to the view of Harry Martin, who at once took alarm and would not come any farther; and finally the Tory leader was forced to give up the idea of capturing the party, and so he came out and had a talk with Harry, and told him to return to the island and tell the man in command that they were to be kept there till they were starved into surrendering. This Harry did, as we have seen.

All that day the Tories remained on guard and no one could possibly have got ashore by way of the path. And all the following night they remained on guard, but the next morning, just as it was coming daylight, they were treated to a surprise. They were just getting ready to have breakfast when suddenly a terrible volley was poured into their ranks, and a score went down, dead and wounded.

"Up and face them!" roared Tarleton, rushing out of his tent. "Give it to them! Give them no quarter!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### A WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT.

Dick and Bob had searched closely for some way of getting to the mainland other than that afforded by the path, but they were baffled. The mud seemed everywhere unbroken by any solid spots, and a test soon showed them



at it would be folly to try to wade to the mainland. A g which they threw into the swamp, end upward, was ickly sucked down and disappeared from sight.

They looked at each other blankly. "I pity the man at gets stuck in there, with no aid at hand!" said Bob. "You are right," agreed Dick; "it would be the end of im."

"And such an end!" Bob shuddered. "Ugh! to be mothered in such a place as that!"

The two stood and stared into the mud for ten minutes without uttering a word, and then Bob turned his eyes pward. Presently he gave utterance to an exclamation.

"What is it, Bob?" asked Dick, looking at his companion, questioningly.

Bob pointed up at the tree-tops. "Look, Dick," he said, do you notice that the tree-tops are very close together, and that, indeed, in most cases they are intertwined?"

Dick started and nodded. "You are right, Bob," he aid, with considerable of excitement in his tone; "the rees are very thick in the swamp, and the branches the ll mingled together."

"That's right; and—what do you think of the idea, ick?"

"You mean the idea of reaching the mainland by climb- g from tree to tree?"

"Yes."

Dick did not immediately reply. He walked along the ore, looking up in the trees earnestly and searchingly, or several minutes. Then he returned to where Bob as standing, and said:

"Bob, I believe it could be done!"

The other nodded. "I think so, too," he said.

"But it will be a very difficult job."

"So it will."

"And a dangerous one, too."

"Yes," with a glance at the mud and a shudder. "If e of the boys was to fall out of the tree into the mud it ould be all up with him."

"Likely; but—I think we will make the attempt to t to the mainland, Bob!"

The youth nodded approvingly. "I think it is the thing do," he agreed.

"Yes; for if we stay here and make no effort to get way, we shall be forced to surrender; for we have but ry little food and water."

"You are right."

"And I'm not going to surrender, if I can help it, ob!"

"I don't blame you."

"Let's see," mused Dick, aloud; "it is about three-quarters of a mile to the mainland, isn't it?"

"Just about."

"That will be a long, tiresome climb, won't it?"

"Yes; but I think we can make it, all right."

"So do I. We won't mind being made tired, if we succeed in getting away from here and get a chance to give those Tories a surprise."

"You are right; and when will we make the attempt to get to the mainland, Dick?"

Dick pondered a few moments, and then said: "I think we had better wait till night to make the attempt, don't you, Bob? If we were to try it in the daytime some of the Tories might see us and then they would stand on the shore and shoot us like we were squirrels, as we came climbing through the tree-tops."

"I judge that you are right about that."

"I think so. In the daytime some of the Tories are likely to be walking along the shore and they would be almost certain to see us; but at night they will all be asleep excepting the sentinels who are stationed at the end of the path. They won't be looking for us to come from any other direction, you know."

"So they won't. Well, I think your plan is the right one. It will be harder climbing through the tree-tops in the dark, and more dangerous; but I think we can do it all right."

"I am sure we can."

"Will we be able to take our muskets?"

"I hardly think we had better try to carry them, Bob."

"We will wear our swords, though?"

"Yes; and we will have our pistols—four to each fellow. With these and the swords we should be able to make it plenty warm for Tarleton's butchers, taking them by surprise, as we shall be able to do."

"You are right."

The youths went back to the cabin, and Dick told the youths what he had decided to try to do. It met with the approval of all, and Harry Martin and his men said they believed it would be practicable.

"I'd never have thought of attempting such a thing," said Harry, "but I think we can do it, all right, for the trees are awfully thick, and the tops are locked together in most cases so tightly that it is hard to tell which branches belong to one tree and which to the other."

All agreed with this. "I believe we can do it," said Mark Morrison, and the others all nodded assent.

Then Dick told them that they would not make the attempt until after dark, and explained his reasons for



not starting at once. All thought it wise to defer the attempt till nightfall.

The youths began figuring on how long a time it would take them to reach the mainland after starting, and there was considerable difference of opinion.

"It will be an exceedingly slow job," said Dick; "you see, we do not know the route, and may have to turn back and try and try again, time after time; and it is my opinion that it will take us pretty much all night to get across."

The others said that they had an idea Dick was not far wrong, and they felt that they had a hard task ahead of them. They were brave and determined youths, however, and they looked forward to the affair with eagerness rather than dismay.

They took things easy throughout the day, and laughed, talked and sang songs. It is probable that the Tories over on the mainland heard them singing, and, if so, they must have wondered at it. Dick, however, improved the opportunity to talk with Harry Martin, and secure all the information possible regarding the lay of the country in the neighborhood, and regarding the people—as to who were Tories and who patriots, etc. Harry was well posted, and was able to give him all the information he needed.

At last night came, and Dick left ten of the boys on the island, for he feared that the Tories might make an attempt to get at them some time during the night, and he wished to have a sufficient number of the youths there so that they could make the enemy think all were still on the island. The Tories must not be allowed to suspect that the youths had got off the island.

They left their muskets, and then Dick and Harry Martin had a brief talk with Mrs. Somers and Stella, telling them to rest easy. "We will be back some time before noon to-morrow," said Dick, "and you will be perfectly safe here."

"Oh, Harry! you must be careful!" said Stella, her eyes growing misty as she thought of the fact that her lover was going into danger.

"I'll be careful, little sweetheart," he said gently, as he drew the beautiful girl to him and gave her a kiss; "don't fear for me. I will be back, safe and sound, to-morrow."

"Oh, I hope so! I pray so!"

Then the youths made their way to the edge of the swamp, on the side toward the mainland, and got ready for their great task. It was decided that Dick should take the lead and that he should be followed by the rest, in single file, as in that way there would be less danger of some of the boys getting lost or losing their lives through

falling into the swamp and not having assistance in getting out again.

This having been decided, Dick climbed a tree which grew right at the edge of the island, and, leaning out, mingled its top branches with those of another tree twenty feet out in the swamp. He was followed by the youths one at a time, and he succeeded in getting across into the top of the other tree without much difficulty.

"I believe we are going to be able to do it, all right," he said to Bob, who was right behind him.

"I hope so, Dick; and I think so, too."

Then the work began in reality; and hard work proved to be. It was slow at the best, and time passed again, after going quite a ways, Dick found that he could not get from the tree he happened to be in to any other and had to turn back. In this way a great deal of time was lost, and the progress toward the mainland was slow. By the time they were halfway across, it was midnight, and it was evident to all that it would be sun-up before they reached the shore. It was fortunate that they thought to bring some water and lunch, otherwise they would have suffered greatly. About midnight Dick turned the word back along the line that they would halt long enough to eat their lunch, and the word was received with joy by all. They were sadly in need of rest, and could rest while eating.

They waited perhaps half an hour, and then the work was resumed. It was slow work and hard work, but the youths were not to be daunted, and they stuck to it. They had the satisfaction of knowing that they were gradually nearing the mainland, and they pleased themselves by thinking of how they would surprise the Tories by attacking them suddenly when they were not expecting anything of the kind.

Dick had sized the affair up just about right when he had said that he thought it would take them pretty much all night to get across to the mainland; it was yet sun-up when he finally got across and climbed down upon the solid earth of the mainland, but by the time the youths had reached the spot the sun was up, though they could not see much, as yet, on account of being in thick timber.

Dick was anxious to strike the Tories before they were up and wide awake, however, and he at once led the youths toward their encampment. He had given the youths instructions the day before, so did not have to waste time talking to them now. All he had to do was to give the word, and they followed, pistols in hand, ready to make the attack at the word from their young commander.



last they came in sight of the Tory encampment. Tories were just beginning to stir around. Some were ready to make fires to cook their breakfast, while a good many had not yet got up, but were lying stretched out on their blankets, sleeping peacefully.

The "Liberty Boys" and their allies, the young men, Harry Martin, crept up till they were within easy shot distance, and then at a signal from Dick they fired a volley in among the unsuspecting Tories. They created terrible confusion among the Tories, and ran around and jumped about like chickens with their heads cut off, until the voice of Tarleton was heard shouting orders for them to face the enemy and to "Give them!" and "Give them no quarter!"

## CHAPTER X.

### TARLETON'S BUTCHERS" ARE SURPRISED AND ROUTED.

Dick realized, however, that even though the Tories numbered his party at least two to one, he had the advantage, by reason of having taken them by surprise, and lost no time in following up his advantage.

"Charge, 'Liberty Boys!'" he roared. "Charge, and as you go! Give it to the cowardly scoundrels and murderers!"

The youths dashed forward with the force of an avalanche, firing as they went, and cheer after cheer went up followed by the battle-cry of the "Liberty Boys": "Down with the king! Long live Liberty!"

Tarleton waved his sword and yelled like a madman, but the reports of the pistols drowned his voice, and his men were really in as bad a muddle as they would have been had he not been there. They did not seem to know what to do, and some of them stood staring in stupid terror at the advancing enemy, and were shot or cut down, for the youths, as they drew near the enemy, drew their swords and began using the deadly weapons with great vim and energy. Dick, who was watching things closely, saw that Harry Martin and his comrades were fighting like demons. "They will become good 'Liberty Boys,'" he said to himself. "they are fighters, and no mistake."

Some of the Tories managed to get their wits sufficiently about them upon the youths, and one or two of the youths went down, but not a great deal of damage was inflicted compared to what the "Liberty Boys" were doing.

At the instant they were in among the Tories the youths began cutting and slashing with their swords, at a great

rate, and the enemy was demoralized. Tarleton tried to get his men to brace up and show serious fight, but they were seemingly incapable of doing so. Dick had his eye on Tarleton, and worked his way across till he was in front of the "Butcher."

"Have at you, you cowardly scoundrel!" cried Dick, and he attacked the Tory commander fiercely. "If I can kill him it will be the best thing that can happen in this part of the country in many a long day," the youth said to himself, and he set to work to do this.

Dick was a fine swordsman. He had never had the benefit of instruction from a good swordsman, but he was naturally good at such things, having a quick and accurate eye, and above all a cool head, and he had more than once got the better of some good British swordsman; so he did not think he would find the partisan chieftain his superior.

Nor did he; Tarleton was not Dick's superior—indeed, he was not his equal, but he was so nearly so that he was able to defend himself successfully for several minutes. Dick kept encouraging his youths by cries to "Keep at them! Give it to them!" and all the time he was attacking Tarleton most furiously.

Tarleton was almost wild with rage, and kept shrieking commands to his men to "Stand your ground! Kill the rebels!" and it was indeed an interesting, not to say sensational spectacle to see the two commanders there, fighting a deadly duel, while their men were engaged in a deadly conflict at the same time.

Presently the Tories got enough, however, and began fleeing for their lives. First they went in ones and twos, but soon the entire force was in flight; and seeing this, Tarleton, with a bitter, snarling curse, suddenly leaped backward, and, whirling, ran with all his might in the direction taken by his men.

"Here, here! Come back and finish the duel like a man!" cried Dick. "Don't run like a coward! Not one of my men shall lift a hand against you; and if you can kill me you shall go free!"

But this offer did not tempt Tarleton. Doubtless he had grave doubts regarding his ability to kill the youth; or he may have doubted the good faith of the speaker. At any rate, he did not offer to come back, but ran with all possible speed, and soon disappeared from sight, among the trees.

Dick and his brave "Liberty Boys" and their allies had won! They had put the Tories to flight; had out-butchered the terrible "butchers." They were delighted, and gave utterance to cheer after cheer to celebrate their victory.



The Tories heard the cheers, and ran all the faster. They thought it meant that they were to be pursued.

Dick went to work to make an inventory of the casualties. He found that sixty-three Tories had been killed and wounded—forty-two were dead and twenty-one wounded, some very seriously, some only slightly. Of the "Liberty Boys," two had been killed and three wounded, while Harry Martin's men had lost two killed and six were wounded. Of course, the deaths of the four youths caused considerable sorrow among their friends and comrades, but it was the fortunes of war, and the "Liberty Boys" especially had long since learned to look upon such things as to be expected, and a matter of course. They knew that it was impossible to engage in battles without losing some of their number, but they had the satisfaction, as a general thing—and as was the case this time—of knowing that the enemy had a great deal more to be sorry for than they had.

A grave was dug and the four youths were buried, and then the nine wounded ones were carried across to the cabin on the island, where they could be taken care of. Mrs. Somers and Stella were of great assistance in this work, and they worked over the youths and gave them tender care, indeed.

Among the wounded Tories was one who had been struck on the head by a bullet; it was a glancing stroke, and had done no particular damage, other than render the man unconscious for a while, and to this man Dick gave some instructions. "Go at once to your headquarters," he said, "and tell Tarleton that he is at liberty to come here and bury his dead and remove his wounded. We do not—in fact, we cannot be bothered with your wounded, as we have no desire to take prisoners. Tell him he will not be fired upon, but may come and go in peace; but that after to-day we will be after him again, and that we shall make this part of the country so warm that we will have to get out of it. Do you understand?"

The Tory said that he did, and he set out at once, promising that they would be back as soon as it was possible for them to get back.

Dick and his comrades did what they could to ease the sufferings of the wounded Tories, and when at last their comrades put in an appearance with litters on which to carry the wounded men away, they withdrew to let the enemy have the field to itself.

The Tories dug graves and buried their dead comrades, and then, placing the wounded men on the litters, took their departure. Dick held a sort of council of war with all hands as participants, and it was decided that in order

to prevent them from again being penned up on the island, half the force should remain on the mainland. The duty of this force would be to keep out scouts in all directions so as to discover the Tories if they attempted to approach and to notify the ones on the island. They were to keep guard while the other portion of the force visited the Tory homes of the neighborhood in search of furniture, the cabin and food and provisions of all kinds.

"If we are to wage successful warfare against Tarleton and his butchers, we must get in good shape for it," said Dick; "so we must lay in a good supply of provisions on the island, and then, if forced to do so, we can return to the island and bid defiance to the enemy."

The others acquiesced in this view of the case. "We must make it so warm for Tarleton that he will want to get away from here, Dick!" said Harry Martin. "The scoundrels have done enough damage to the patriots of this neighborhood."

So it was decided, and half of Dick's force remained on the mainland, while the other half took up its abode on the island; but it did not settle down there to take it easy. Indeed, it was the force that was to do the work, and it immediately began its work of visiting the homes of the vicinity and levying upon such articles of furniture as were needed, and upon provisions of all kinds. The Tories protested, and some declared that they were patriots, but Dick had taken care to have a number of Harry Martin's youths with him, and they were able to tell him whether or not the people were speaking the truth.

Some of the youths who had been with Harry Martin went to the homes of the parents of the two boys who had been killed and broke the news of their deaths as gently as was possible. The parents were sorely grieved, of course, but they realized that the youths had lost their lives in a good cause, and that the work they had done and that the others were still doing, and going on, would perhaps prevent many patriot men and women in the neighborhood from losing their lives.

At first, when the youths who had been with Harry Martin asked their parents to let them remain with the party of youths who had come down to South Carolina to fight the Tories under Tarleton, the parents had hesitated, but when they were told that the youths were the "Liberty Boys," and that the still more famous Slater, the "Champion Spy of the Revolution," was with them, they did not hesitate any longer, but told them to go ahead and to stay with the "Liberty Boys" and to fight as long as they were in that part of the country.



evening a great deal had been accomplished. The island had been furnished with articles of furniture taken from Tory families, and by some things by friendly, patriot people, and a great amount of provisions had been carried to the island and stored for use.

We are now in pretty good shape to begin our campaign against 'Butcher Tarleton,' said Dick, with a look of satisfaction, as they were eating supper that evening in front of the cabin.

So we are," agreed Bob Estabrook; "and if we don't let him wish he was somewhere else, it will be very strange!"

The "Liberty Boys" were chock full of confidence in their ability to administer a thrashing to Tarleton, and were eager to get after him again. Dick told them that they would soon have the opportunity of giving Tarleton his butchers more than one severe blow. "We must go slow and take things easy, and be careful, however," said Dick; "we don't want to get in such a big hurry as to look something and get into trouble. We must make sure that the other fellows will have all the trouble—or at least the greater portion of it."

You are right, Dick!" said Harry Martin, and the rest nodded to signify that this was their way of looking at the matter.

## CHAPTER XI.

### TARLETON RETREATS TO CHARLESTON.

When Tarleton found his men had been whipped a second time by the audacious young strangers, he was almost wild with rage. He called a halt as soon as he could do so, and tried to get his men straightened up sufficiently so that they could go back and meet their conquerors, but found this a difficult task.

"Them fellers air reg'lar demons, I tell yo'!" said one of the men, with a dismal shake of the head; "an' I don't think I'd better fool with 'em until arter we hev got a lot more men'n we hev got now."

Tarleton looked around upon the faces of the rest and saw that this was the general verdict, so he reluctantly gave up the idea of returning and visiting vengeance on the heads of the daring youths who had treated them so roughly.

They made their way onward to their headquarters in the basin, and had only just reached there when the wounded man, whom Dick had sent after them as a messenger, got there and gave Tarleton Dick's message.

"All right," said the Tory commander; "fifty of you go back at once and bury the dead and bring the wounded here."

The men improvised some rude litters and set out, arriving, as we have seen, and, after burying their dead and taking their wounded, returned to their headquarters, arriving there about the middle of the afternoon.

Several partisan forces had put in an appearance while they were gone, and now there were about three hundred men on hand. Tarleton was not yet satisfied, however. He had had two tastes of the quality of the wonderful young stranger "rebels," and did not intend to be caught a third time, if he could help it. He would wait till he had had such a superiority of force that the "rebels" would not have any chance for their lives, and then he would hunt them down and kill every mother's son of them. Oh, but he was raging! He told his officers that nothing short of the utter annihilation of this audacious body of "rebels" would satisfy him.

"We must wipe them off the face of the earth!" he cried, fiercely; "it shall not be said that Tarleton was defied and whipped by a band of youths who have not yet grown beards! Zounds! when I think of what has already happened I am ready to do murder!"

He sent out runners with instructions to hunt up all the parties of Tories that it was possible to find, and bring them into the encampment. "I want five hundred men," he said; "and then we will go out and hunt those scoundrels up. Remember, when the time comes, they are to have no quarter! We will kill every one of them—every one! Not a one shall be left to tell the story!"

During the rest of the afternoon several small parties of Tories came in, and as each party put in an appearance Tarleton's satisfaction and delight grew, and he became better-natured and less like a wounded tiger or a bear with a sore head.

"Aha! things are working all right!" he exclaimed, again and again; "we will soon be in shape to teach those insolent rebels a lesson!"

He decided to do nothing that night, but to wait until the next, as he would have another entire day in which to get in more parties of his men. This was where he made a mistake—but then, he did not know who he was dealing with. Had he known that the party of audacious "rebels" were the "Liberty Boys," he might have been



more on his guard and made more haste to get in the first blow.

Meantime, Dick Slater had not been idle. As we have seen he and his brave youths had put in most of the day securing provisions for use on the island in case they were forced to retreat to it and stand a siege. But as evening came, and they had not seen or heard anything of the Tories, he made up his mind that he would at least make an attempt to strike the enemy a blow that night. He spoke to the youths about it, and they were eager to make the attempt.

"Tarleton may not be looking for us to do anything so bold," said Bob, "and in that case we will be able to give him a surprise and get in a hard blow."

"That's the way I look at it," agreed Dick.

The other youths all said the same, and so it was decided. There was no doubt of the fact that Tarleton had gone back to the basin where he had his headquarters, they thought. He would feel secure there, because of his superior force, and would not think it necessary to change his location.

Dick left ten of the youths to keep guard over the path leading to the island, so as to protect Mrs. Somers and Stella, and then with the rest set out for the stronghold of Tarleton. They knew the way, and had no difficulty in arriving in the vicinity. Then Dick went forward to spy upon the Tories. He took the same course that Black Bob had taken the other night, when he had escaped and went on to Tarleton's camp and warned them that an enemy was coming.

"It is certainly a shorter way than the other," thought Dick; "and then I will be able to look right down in the camp from the top of the bluff."

He went up the little side ravine a short distance, then climbed the steep side and made his way across in the direction of the encampment. Down the slope and up the one beyond he went, and then he suddenly found himself at the top of the bluff looking down into the Tory encampment.

He remained there fifteen or twenty minutes, taking note of everything. "Jove! He has a lot more men than he had the other time we were here," thought Dick. "He has been getting reinforcements."

Dick made an estimate, as well as he could, of the number of men in the camp, and decided that there were at least three hundred. "Oh, well, that is all right," he said to himself. "I do not intend to mix it up with them this time, but we will simply stay out a ways in the darkness,

and keep firing on them. In that way we will be able to kill quite a number, and it will worry Tarleton considerably."

Dick made his way back to where he had left the youths, and told them what he had seen, and what he intended doing. They were ready for work, and they stole forward, going in the same direction Dick had. They were soon at the top of the bluff, and it was to see that a goodly portion of the encampment was within musket-shot distance of the youths.

Dick gave the youths their instructions. "All to liberate aim," he said, "and when you have done so give the word to fire. We want to down as many as possible at the first volley, as they will not give us much chance at them afterwards."

The youths realized this, and took as good aim as they could in the darkness, determined to bring as many down as possible. Dick waited till they had time to secure their aim, and then he gave the word to fire.

Crash—roar! The volley rang out loudly, so loud that it was even louder than under ordinary circumstances, and the night was still, and those who heard the sound were expecting anything of the kind—that is, the one upon whom it fell were not.

The volley did considerable damage, notwithstanding the youths had to take aim in the darkness, and at least, of the Tories went down.

Instantly all was excitement and confusion in the camp. The Tories ran this way and that, but the majority seemed to know that the volley had been fired from the top of the bluff, and hastened to get away from that vicinity.

"The rebels! The rebels!" was the cry, and Tarleton came hastily out of his tent and began issuing orders at a great rate. "Up and to arms!" he cried. "Make ready to repulse the rebels! Stand your ground! Don't run! You did the other night, for if you do I shall shoot you dead, one after another, with my own hand."

The men seized their weapons, and then began firing at the top of the bluff, though their chances for hitting anyone were, of course, slim.

Dick ordered the boys to reload their muskets as fast as possible, and when they had done so he led them around the edge of the bluff to a point a third of the way around the basin. Here he called a halt, and feeling confident that quite a good many of the Tories were within musket-shot distance, he gave the order to take aim. The youths did so, and then Dick gave the order to fire.



oar of the volley rang out, and a number of the Tories went down.

"Charge!" roared Tarleton, leaping forward and leading the way, sword in hand. "Charge the scoundrels before they have time to reload their muskets."

The Tories followed their leader, with wild yells of rage. They were angry, because of the deaths of a number of their comrades, and were eager to get revenge. On the slope they came, at the best speed of which they were capable, and when they were half way up there came another volley from the pistols of the "Liberty Boys" this time, and a number of their men went down.

With wild yells, the Tories continued on up the slope, to receive another volley, which dropped some more of their tracks. Still they pressed forward, yelling like madmen, and Tarleton, who was in the lead, cried out in a loud voice: "Forward, my brave boys! They have thrown off all their weapons, and can't give us another volley. Forward, and cut them to pieces!"

Scarcely had the words left his lips when there came another crashing roar from the top of the bluff, and a number of the Tories went down. The enemy had more men than Tarleton had thought.

"Never mind; that ends it!" cried Tarleton. "They can't fire any more. Up and at them! Give them no quarter!"

"Ash—roar! Again the volley rang out, and the oncoming Tories received a hail of bullets right in their faces. They faltered, and almost stopped, while cries of alarm escaped them. "There must be a thousand of them," one fellow cried.

"That's right!" panted another.

"No, no! There are not more than a hundred!" cried Tarleton fiercely. "At them! Forward!"

"Ash—roar! Again the volley rang out, and wild yells of rage escaped the lips of the Tories. "I tell yo' thar's a thousand uv 'em!" howled one, and the rest took up the cry. They could not understand how it could be possible that one hundred men could fire so many volleys. They did not know that they were dealing with one of the greatest commanders in the entire patriot army. Dick had made a study of this sort of warfare, and he had learned one thing that had been of great benefit to him.

This was that it was best to divide up the number of men so that it was possible for any given party of men to fire, and make them at least double in number, by having only half the force fire at a time. Now, each of the youths who were with him had four pistols, and this would make

it possible for all to fire five volleys, counting the muskets, provided they all fired each time; but by dividing the volleys up, and having only one-half the force fire at a time, he could double the number of volleys, making it possible for them to fire ten, instead of five. This was what was being done now, and it was proving very effective, for the Tories were running up against a force the equal, or possibly more than the equal of their own.

Tarleton was urging his men to continue onward, and was yelling at the top of his voice and threatening what he would do if they refused, when suddenly another volley was poured into the ranks of the Tories. This threw them into great disorder, and some started to flee back down the hill in spite of the wild commands and threats from their maddened commander. Dick, who was watching affairs closely, realized that here was a chance to get in a crushing blow, and he suddenly yelled out, at the top of his voice: "Charge, 'Liberty Boys!' Charge the scoundrels, and sweep them off the face of the earth! Give it to them!"

Instantly the youths bounded over the brow of the hill, and darted down toward the Tories, at the same time firing another volley from their pistols.

"Down with the king! Long live Liberty!" they cried, and then cheer after cheer went up. They were young, and had good lungs, and they made as much noise cheering as three times their number might have expected to make, and this, coupled with the volley from their pistols, was too much for the overwrought nerves of the Tories, who turned and fled as if the Old Nick was after them, yelling in terror. Many of them threw down their muskets in order to run the faster, and they were certainly wild with fright, and in vain Tarleton yelled commands for them to stop. They paid no attention whatever to him, and, indeed, several bumped against him, and finally one knocked him down and ran over him in his blind flight. After them went the "Liberty Boys," still cheering, and Tarleton, realizing that his men could not be stopped, turned and fled for his life.

The "Liberty Boys" pursued half way down the hill, and then Dick gave the command to stop and return. He knew that his force was not equal to the task of entering into a combat with the Tories on an equal footing, and like a wise commander he believed in taking no chances. They had gained a wonderful victory as it was, and he did not wish to spoil it by undue enthusiasm. The youths stopped when Dick shouted the command for them to do so, and then all retreated back up the hill, reaching the summit by the time the Tories had stopped running—at



the farther side of the basin, in which was the encampment.

"Now, reload as quickly as possible," ordered Dick. "We have had wonderful success, and we don't want to have it marred by being forced to flee on account of not having our weapons in shape for use."

The youths realized this, and went to work with energy, and reloaded their muskets and pistols, keeping a wary eye on the enemy the while. As soon as this had been finished Dick led the way, and they started around, with the intention of again getting in musket-shot distance of the Tories, who were gathered near the opposite side of the basin. Tarleton was haranguing his men, however, and he evidently suspected that the enemy would make the move they were making, for his force suddenly left the point where it had been gathered, and moved across, and climbed the steep slope, reaching the summit before Dick and his men could get around to head them off.

The youths were within musket-shot distance, however, and Dick gave the order to fire, which the youths obeyed, and the volley rang out, followed by wild yells of rage and pain from the direction of the enemy.

Fearing that the Tories might charge upon them, Dick gave the command to retire back into the timber, and they hastened to do so. They had gone but a short distance when there came the roar of a volley—the first that the Tories had fired, though they had done some desultory firing as individuals, while trying to climb the side of the basin, a few minutes before. Fortunately the youths had retired far enough so that the bullets of the Tories did no damage, although they could be heard zipping among the trees near at hand.

Dick decided that it would be a good plan to let matters rest now, and told the youths to keep on moving. "We will draw off, and make our way leisurely back in the direction of our headquarters," he said. "We have done enough work for one night, and should be satisfied, for we haven't lost a man, while we have killed and wounded nearly a hundred of the Tories."

"We have certainly done well," agreed Bob.

"Yes, yes! We could not ask for anything better," was the remark of Mark Morrison, and the others murmured their assent to this statement.

So they made their way slowly and leisurely back to their headquarters, the island on the lake; but a thought came to Dick that Tarleton might be so furious that he would come and try to get a blow in on them immediately. So he stationed his men near the point where the path

reached the mainland, and then sent out scouts to keep watch for the approach of the enemy.

It was not long before one of the scouts came in and reported that the enemy was coming, and then Dick got ready to play a trick on Tarleton. He told his men to follow him, and they moved back, and then making a wide march in a roundabout way, came in behind the Tories and followed them till they reached the vicinity of the point where the path led to the island. Here the Tories came to a stop, and Dick made ready to deal them another blow that they would not forget in a hurry.

He had given the youths their instructions, and they knew just what was expected of them. So now they crept forward, with all the stealth of the red Indians of the forest, and got close to the Tories. Dick did not hesitate to take advantage of the enemy. Tarleton had a blood record, and was known to be a perfect fiend. He delighted in cutting down enemies, and not leaving one alive to tell the story. His motto was "No quarter!" and his method had earned for him the name of "The Butcher," so Dick had no scruples whatever in giving him some of his own medicine. At a signal from Dick the youths took aim, and then suddenly on the night air rang out the startling order: "Fire!"

Instantly the youths obeyed, and a volley rang out that awoke the echoes for miles around. The youths were close to the enemy, and had taken good aim, and the execution was terrible, at least seventy-five of the Tories going down either dead or wounded.

The stroke came so suddenly and unexpectedly that the Tories were for a few moments paralyzed by amazement and terror. They had come with the intention of getting in a blow on their enemies, and to have the tables turned in this manner was appalling. Tarleton himself was the first to recover his senses, and he drew his sword and yelled for his men to charge the enemy. This aroused his men, and they started to obey, but by the time they had faced around and were ready to start Dick's men had two pistols out and cocked, and they poured two volleys right into the faces of the Tories, doing terrible execution, for they were so close they could not help it.

Yells and curses escaped the lips of the Tories, and urged on by Tarleton they started to dash forward, but again the volleys rang out, and this was too much for their already strained nerves, and they whirled and ran like scared rabbits.

"After them!" cried Dick. "After the cowards, and give it to them!"

The "Liberty Boys" obeyed, and hastened after



keeping Tories, firing a couple more volleys as they went. The Tories scattered, however, every man taking a different direction, and as it would be impossible to do much execution, Dick called the youths back, and told them to let the enemy go.

"We have done exceedingly well," he said; "and may be well let well enough alone."

The others thought the same, and they returned to the scene of the encounter, feeling very well satisfied. Although the Tories had outnumbered them greatly, they had, by the use of strategy, managed to deal the enemy some terrible blows, and what was the most wonderful thing of all, not one of their number had been killed, though many had been wounded, two of them quite severely—the Tories having fired one volley, just as they had started to charge the youths.

Tarleton was furious. He was, however, getting rapidly wiser. He had started out by under-rating the "rebels" who had appeared in the vicinity, and had supposed that they could easily wipe them out. Now he knew that it was going to be not only no easy task, but an exceedingly difficult one, even to get the better of the enemy. His men were terribly cast down. They did not know what to make of such a foe. They had heard Dick call his men "Liberty Boys," too, and they had heard of the famous company of youths who called themselves "The Liberty Boys of '76," and were somewhat terrorized by the thought that they had to fight such terrible fellows. When they had been pitted against the Whigs of the vicinity, men whom they knew, and whom they outnumbered, they had been brave enough and had killed without mercy; but now to be confronted by such veterans as were the "Liberty Boys," and who had made such a reputation as terrible fighters, was quite another thing.

Tarleton himself realized that he was in for it. He began to believe that the "Liberty Boys" had been sent down to that part of the country on purpose to make him miserable, and he felt that they had succeeded extremely well, so far.

"I will get the better of them, though!" he said to himself, with angry determination; "I will kill every one of them! Not a one shall return to the North alive!"

He had retreated toward his stronghold, after his men had fled from the "Liberty Boys," but stopped when they had gone perhaps half a mile, and held a council of war. The question up before them was whether or not they should go back and try to strike the enemy a blow, or return to their headquarters and wait till they got rein-

forcements; before they had settled the matter a messenger, one of the wounded Tories who had fell at the first fire from the "Liberty Boys," put in an appearance and told Tarleton that Dick Slater sent word that he might return and bury his dead and remove his wounded. "He said that I should tell you that he has no use for prisoners, or for wounded men, and that is the reason he is willing you should take your men away," the messenger said; "and he said for me to tell you that he is in this fight to stay, and that he will remain in this part of the country till all your men are killed or have taken refuge in flight."

Tarleton was very angry. "He is a bold scoundrel, isn't he?" he said, hoarsely.

"He is that!" was the reply; "them fellers air reg'lar demons in er fight."

"But I'll kill every one of them, or run them out of the country, as sure as my name is Tarleton!" the Tory chief declared, savagely.

He ordered some of his men to return to the spot where the encounter had taken place and go to work to bury the dead, while another party hastened to headquarters to get the litters, with which to carry the wounded away.

This work took them nearly the rest of the night, and when morning came and Tarleton took account of the damages and found that he had lost one hundred and ten men, dead, and thirty-one wounded, his rage knew no bounds. He swore that he would be revenged upon the bold youths who had created such havoc, and he began calling in all the parties of Tories that were out, pillaging and burning, for he realized that it would be necessary to have all his men if he were to wage a successful warfare against the shrewd "Liberty Boys."

But Dick Slater was not the youth to sit down idly and wait for an enemy to strengthen himself so as to be able to strike him a severe blow. He kept the "Liberty Boys" busy, and harried the Tories in such a manner as to make it impossible for Tarleton to do much save defend himself.

Another thing Dick did was to cut off a number of the small parties as they were coming to join Tarleton, and cut them to pieces and disperse them.

Tarleton had never encountered such an enemy as Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" proved to be. They seemed to be here, there and everywhere, and they moved with such rapidity that the Tory leader never knew where to look for them. When he thought he had located them, and went there to attack them, he found nothing to reward him for his trouble; and the chances were a hundred to one that his force would be ambushed before it got



back to headquarters, and a goodly number of the men slain.

Several times Tarleton thought he had the enemy penned up on the island in the swamp, but each time he was rudely undeceived, by receiving a blow from the rear when he was not expecting it, and at last he began to realize that he was up against something the like of which he had never encountered before.

His men, too, were becoming disheartened. They even began to think that Dick Slater and his band of "Liberty Boys" were more than human. "They air heer ter-day an' thar ter-morrer," said one, when they were discussing the matter, one day; "I don't see how enny livin' peeple kin git aroun' like they do! I tell yo', I've hed erbout all I want uv this bizness!"

The others said the same, and soon the men began grumbling in Tarleton's hearing. They said they did not want to remain and all be killed by the terrible "Liberty Boys," and Tarleton saw that something would have to be done.

Indeed, he realized at last that he was no match for the shrewd commander of the "Liberty Boys," and that if he remained in the neighborhood the result would be that all his men would lose their lives. True, they occasionally succeeded in killing one or two of the enemy, but for every one of the youths that fell, fifty to seventy-five of their own men went down, and this was too unequal a fight to keep up. He had already lost more than half his entire force in South Carolina, and it was growing smaller every day, so at last he reluctantly gave up and told his men that they would leave the country and go to Charleston.

"Those scoundrels are too much for us," he acknowledged; "and if we stay it will result in the loss of the lives of every one of us. I did not think there were such terrible fighters in the rebel army, but my eyes have been opened, and for once I must acknowledge that I have been beaten and out-generaled in every way by a force much inferior to my own. We will go to Charleston at once."

And they did. Dick sent scouts to follow Tarleton, as to see whether or not his retreat was real or only a ruse; and when the scouts returned with the news that the retreat was real, and that "Tarleton, the Butcher" had left that part of the country, great was the rejoicing by the patriots of the vicinity. Thanks were voted Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys," and they were the heroes of the day. The youths bore their honors modestly, though, and simply said that they were glad they had been able to free the patriots from the presence of that terrible scourge, Tarleton, and his band of butchers.

The youths received a message from General Greene, soon after, and went up into Virginia to join him and help make the redcoats wish they had stayed in England.

As for the youths themselves, they were never sorry for having been sent away by the commander-in-chief under "sealed orders." It had been a lively and pleasing experience.

When the war was ended and peace was over all, and the people of America were free, Dick Slater one day received a letter from South Carolina. He opened it and found inclosed an invitation to the wedding of Harry Martin and Stella Somers. Of course, it was too far for him to go, but he sent the happy couple his best wishes for their happiness throughout life.

#### THE END.

The next number (62) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS DARING STROKE; OR, WITH 'LIGHT HORSE HARRY' AT PAULUS HOOK," by Harry Moore.

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